


LENTEN SERMONS

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LENTEN SERMONS

LENTEN SERMONS

BY
REPRESENTATIVE PREACHERS

EDITED BY
FREDERICK J. NORTH

EDITOR OF "EASTER SERMONS," "ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SERMONS,"
"HARVEST THANKSGIVING SERMONS," "LIFE'S BEGINNINGS,"
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PREFACE

THE season of Lent, no less than the great Christian Festivals, makes a strong appeal to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and give Him their allegiance. The sermons contained in the following pages are set forth as a contribution to the devotional literature so largely in demand for this solemn season, and in the hope that they will be found helpful to those who desire to make the Forty Days a time for serious thought and reflection on the "things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health."

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

BY THE VERY REV. A. E. BURN, D.D.
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"Our Father"—St. Matt. vi. 9.

The Lord's Prayer

HAVE you ever noted how the Lord's Prayer is built up on this single thought? There are two things which every good earthly father expects from his children, reverence and obedience. Our Father in Heaven will therefore expect them from us. And in speaking of the reverence thus due our Lord carries us up to the highest point of the ladder of prayer. As the saintly Bishop Wilson of Sodor and Man once put it: "He knows little of himself who is not much in prayer, and he knows little of God who is not much in praise." On all the lower steps of penitence and petition, and even of thanksgiving, self is concerned, is rightly concerned. For the vision of God constrains even an Isaiah to cry out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." And as in asking for all that we need both in body and soul, and in that prayer of asking for others, which we call Intercession, so even in the complementary act of Thanks-

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giving, often ungratefully neglected, self enters in; for it is an increase of our personal happiness if those who are dear to us are blessed with us. But beyond the highest reach of thanksgiving lies the fair region of praise, where self drops out. We thank God for what He has done. We praise Him for what He is. This is the worship of holy angels, and all the company of Heaven, both in the Old Testament and in the New. "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His Glory." "Praise God in His holiness" is the final message of the Old Testament Psalter, as it is the supreme message of the Christian Apocalypse.

Surely we ought to couple the words "on earth as it is in heaven" with the words "Hallowed be Thy Name," no less than with "Thy kingdom come" and "Thy will be done."

"Hallowed," i.e., worshipped, glorified as holy, "be Thy Name." What then do we mean by Holiness? We have been taught lately by Professor Otto to think of "Holiness" as something both fascinating and awe-inspiring. There is no doubt that this is true of the age-long progress of human thought towards more spiritual ideas of God's Being. For us Christians it may suffice to say that Holiness is love raised to its

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highest power, utterly separated from evil, and utterly concentrated on good. For Love is greater than Righteousness in so far as Love includes self-sacrifice. The measure of Divine Love is hinted at, it is not fully expressed in the Apostolic reflection, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son." For the love of the Father passes knowledge. But we must be careful to note that such reflection lay beyond the ken of the disciples when the Lord first taught them thus to pray: "Our Father, hallowed be Thy name," though it would be ungrateful of us not to bring it in as the fruit of the seed-thought which He had planted in sympathetic minds. From reverence we pass on to obedience. There are two kinds of obedience, active and passive. At the beginning of His ministry, the Lord took up the theme of the forerunner, John the Baptist: "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." In every age it is the duty of His followers to dare something for the extension of that kingdom in the hearts of men. We know it as "the Kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." But it needs, as the Lord at the end of His ministry made clear, "Power from on high," to enable us to be witnesses for the Kingdom and for the King. It is no easy calling to stand up for honesty and

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purity and truth in a society honeycombed by fraud and impurity and deceit. The Lord knew what was in man, He hastens to add that we must be ready to "bear" as well as to "dare." And all that His witnesses have to suffer of ridicule and persecution finds utterance in the prayer, "Thy will be done." "Though He were a son yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered." And the disciple is not above his Master, he, too, must take his cross. This thought seems a far cry from the picture of the radiant joy of the heavenly life in which our Father receives the adoration of all the citizens of the kingdom of glory, but it is only too true that the kingdom is not yet established in the dark places of the earth, and it is the outstanding characteristic of our Lord as a teacher to face facts, living as man among men, for Himself, when true to His own teaching this was the prayer of His own Agony in the garden: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt."

We pass on to the second part of the Prayer, in which we think of the things which a child may rightly expect from a father. So familiar are the words that we find it difficult to fathom the depths of their appropriateness. "Which of

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you that is a father," the Lord asked in His teaching, "if his son ask bread will he give him a stone?" No, the first duty of a father is to feed. It is the primary parental instinct, for if the young lions do lack and suffer hunger it is because the lion has failed to find his prey. So the Lord bids us ask quite naturally and simply for daily bread. And here again so simply does He teach what is one of the great principles of His teaching, that we often miss its significance. We are to pray for food, not dainties, and that from day to day. I suggest that we should carry on this word "day by day" when we come to prayer for forgiveness and protection, for we need them also each day as it comes. In the Sermon on the Mount He has much to say about worrying. "Be not over-anxious about the morrow, for the morrow shall take care for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

It has been well said that "to-day has two enemies, yesterday and to-morrow." If we think too much about the past, we are apt to become pessimistic, talking of the good old days which will never return. If on the other hand we think too much about the future, we spend our time in day-dreams and forget that the use of castles in the air is that we may begin to build

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foundations under them. True wisdom for man is to work in "the living present," and to trust the Heavenly Father from day to day to provide food and raiment, and with it the deep contentment which is the brightness of all who, like St. Francis of Assisi, are willing to live the simple life in the Master's steps.

But "man doth not live by bread alone." His soul, so far as it is aware of God, needs daily quickening, "for no man hath quickened his own soul." And it is characteristic of the Lord to teach that man needs daily forgiveness. For He spake as never man spake, and yet could only remain silent when John the Baptist spoke to Him of repentance, alone silent among all that crowd of penitents whom John baptized in Jordan! Well might he exclaim: "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" The Lord would have us quite simply ask for forgiveness, and trust our Father to give it as freely as He may fairly claim that we should forgive others. On different occasions He seems to have used two words, the one, "trespasses," including all wrong things done and said and thought, the other, "debts," including good things left undone, unsaid, and unthought. It is of deep significance that He always laid so much stress on sins of omission, as He was

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always stern in condemning the sins of religious people, especially the pride which could say: "Come not near to me, for I am holier than thou." No one who has begun his prayer with the thought of Divine Holiness can feel like that, or when tempted to think it fail to reflect on his daily shortcomings, even if his quickened conscience has no other fault to find with him at the moment of that passing day.

How naturally then the words follow, "And lead us not into temptation." Temptation is a necessary element in the history of moral growth. As has been well said: "Man gains the strength of the temptation that he has overcome." He would not blame himself for sin if he did not in his heart of hearts feel that he might have done better. There is no need to dispute about the limitations of his free will, for the recorded experience of the saints witnesses to the fact that in God's service they have found perfect freedom. And it is to their experience that we appeal for confirmation of the mysterious words that follow, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil *one*." All that we know of the possibilities of thought transference, of the power of suggestion, lends point to the Lord's plain teaching that the evil thoughts of pride and envy and malice, which come,

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as He says, "from the heart and defile the man," are not self-induced in the first instance, but from without. The world of to-day is hard hit by envy and malice. Is it not some comfort to say with Christ, "An enemy hath done this," and learn to pray with confidence, "Deliver us from the evil *one*"? We are indeed in the dark, but we know that a little child with his father's hand clasping his is not afraid of the dark. He trusts him for protection as he trusts him for daily bread and forgiveness. "We have had fathers of our flesh and we gave them reverence," we recognize their claim on our obedience; "shall we not rather be obedient to the Father of our spirits and lives?" The Lord's Prayer is a prayer for living men founded on experience of human life.

One might be tempted to think that this line of interpretation was artificial if we could not supplement it by reference to that wonderful parable, "the Gospel in the Gospel," as it has been called, in which Christ traces the downfall of a wasteful son and his restoration. Why did the Prodigal Son go wrong? Because he did not honour his father. We hear of him growing up and picture him a bright, restless boy, in every way a contrast to his elder brother, inclined to be rebellious to discipline, not un-

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naturally eager to go out and make his own way in the world. His fatal mistake was that he did not honour his father. It was equivalent to saying, "I am tired of waiting till you die" when he claims, "Give me my portion." And when he gets it, without care for the way he hurts his father's love, without thought of sin against Heaven, "not many days after" (ah, the mischief has been done many days ago), he goes off to the far country and wastes it in riotous living. Irreverence and disobedience work their havoc in his character. What does he soon lack? "Daily bread." "There arose a mighty famine in that land." How true is the proverb, "Waste not, want not." He wanders from one boon companion to another. They were willing enough to help him squander. Now all that he hears is, "My dear fellow, I am just as hard up as you." Have you ever heard noted the force of the tense in the Greek word, "No one kept giving to him"? Some days there was something to spare, on others nothing. He hires himself out to feed swine. "He would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat," possibly the beans of the carob tree eaten by the peasants of Calabria in times of dearth. He comes to himself, his true self; he reflects, "How many hired servants of my father have bread

enough and to spare, while I perish with hunger ! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, ‘ Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee and am no more worthy to be called thy son.’ ” He lacks daily bread. What does he want more ? Forgiveness. What does he find ? We picture him in his rags and weariness tramping the long road, coming in sight at last of familiar landmarks, wondering what sort of a reception he will find from his father and that elder brother. Yet see, there is his father looking out for him as he has so often done, running to meet him, to fall on his neck and kiss him. He is allowed to make his confession, but not to plead to be received back as a servant. As a son he is welcomed, fed with a banquet, clothed with the best robe, shoes for his feet, a ring for his hand, forgiven, safe in the protection of home. It was meet that they should make merry and be glad, for (as the father said) “ this my son was dead and is alive again ; he was lost and is found.”

Here we have the same plan of thought outlining the true relationship of a son of man to an earthly father as a mirror of our relationship to our Father in Heaven. We bow our heads in silence, for we are conscious of deep mystery. Who is it that has this unfathomable knowledge

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of the mind of the Father of spirits ? Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth. Whence this knowledge ? By inspiration alone ? Or is there a deeper mystery of Sonship in His life known only to Himself until men learn with Paul of Tarsus to speak of " the light of the knowledge of the glory of God seen in the face of Jesus Christ " ?

There is another question which I venture to think throws light on the former. Neither in the Prayer nor in the Parable is anything said about Atonement. Forgiveness is freely granted upon repentance and confession of sin, with the implied condition in the Prayer that we must be ready to forgive others as freely.

But we must remember that the Parable is one of a series, and that the first speaks of a good shepherd seeking through the night at risk of life and limb to find the lost sheep. We know how the Lord thought of Himself as the Good Shepherd and prepared to lay down His life for the sheep. He could not put everything into one parable, but the offer of His life as " a ransom for many " was deliberately purposed, and both St. Peter and St. Paul assume that He died for our sin (1 Cor. xv. 3; 1 Peter iii. 18).

As Mr. Selwyn has well said: " The message which the Apostles took into the Gentile world was not simply a message of Divine forgiveness;

for few felt any need of forgiveness. It was first of all a message about God—about His Holiness, His Kingdom, His purpose for man; about sin and its satisfaction; and only then about grace and eternal life. In other words, it was a Theodicy: and it was to those who accepted this Theodicy that they taught Christ's story of the Prodigal Son."*

Lent is passing away and each day brings us nearer to the Holy Week in which we shall follow our Lord to His Cross, and learn again how in the hour of His supreme self-sacrifice He was true to Himself and to His teaching. For the first word from the Cross was, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," and the last, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Let us pray for grace to make a resolution which may have an abiding influence on our lives: in the light of His teaching we will revise our prayers, will enlarge and enrich our intercourse with God. Few of us would dare to say that our prayers need no improvement, and the greatest saint would be the first to acknowledge that we have set before us a never-ending path of progress in understanding, as the Psalmist says, "of the God of our joy and gladness."

* *The Approach to Christianity*, p. 159.

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There are three questions of outstanding importance which claim our most careful thought. The first is this. Do we give enough room in our prayers to praise, that glorifying of the name of the Father, to which the Lord Himself assigns the first place in His Prayer? It was a true instinct which led the early Church in its Liturgies to make so much of the *Sanctus* in the forefront of the Great Offering. "Praise waiteth for Thee in Zion," sang the Psalmist, but there is far too little of it in many hearts to-day. Some Psalm verses and the *Gloria* would make all the difference in tuning many a heart to that pitch of devoutness at which we offer ourselves to do God's will, and receive from His Holy Spirit guidance as to its meaning for us.

This brings us to our second question. Do we face out the fact that Obedience implies "daring" as well as "bearing"? We ought to be more adventurous as citizens of God's Kingdom, letting our light shine before men, carrying the light into the dark places of the earth. The World Call has made that plain enough, and the very least we can do about it is to give the words "Thy kingdom come" a definite application to one or other of the Overseas Mission Fields. Of course a really heroic response means suffering and sacrifice,

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but as Dante said, "In His will is our peace."

Thirdly, we must ask ourselves whether we have ever properly understood the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, the plain invitation to ask God, when thus prepared by acts of devotion to His service, for all things that we need both for soul and body.

It is strange that in early Christian writers our prayer "daily bread" is explained as food for the soul, which is paralleled in Keble's line, "Nor by 'our daily bread' mean common food." But it must have meant food for the body in its first context. Only let us be careful to remember the qualifying "day by day." Each day as it comes the Lord will provide, the Lord will forgive, the Lord will protect. Such an ideal of prayer is within the scope of the young as well as the old. It is an ideal with which the fire of imagination can be kindled, and the wisdom of the wise can never surpass its range. When young men see visions and old men dream dreams, a day of the Lord is at hand, and an outpouring of His spirit upon all flesh. "Even so come Lord Jesus."

LIFE THROUGH CHRIST'S DEATH

BY THE REV. H. C. CARTER, M.A.
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“And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.”—Luke ix. 51.

Life through Christ's Death

VERY early in the Christian era, one of the New Testament writers, summarizing the work which Jesus Christ had accomplished by His mission to the world, said that He had brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. That was the difference Jesus had made for mankind. He had given the promise of *life*, given it in such a way that men could lay hold of it with sure confidence.

The New Testament is the record of an experience, a many-sided experience, the wealth of which it is taking all the centuries to explore and to unfold. But if we try to gather up in a word what that experience was at the heart of it, we must say that it was an experience of *life*, discovered through Jesus Christ.

The Christian Gospel came into a world over which death brooded like a pall. It was the world of Jew and Gentile. The Jews were the little minority, the Gentiles the great mass of human kind; yet the world was thus truly divided; for the Jews had knowledge of the unity, the sovereignty and the ethical holiness of God,

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while the nations outside their pale were groping in a hundred different ways amidst idolatries. But for both Jew and Gentile alike the course of man on earth was shadowed by the forebodings and the fear of death turning it into tragedy. It was not, for either, a world over which there shone a serene sky of happiness. Man cannot be happy, with happiness that is more than a flare that blazes and expires, unless he knows that he lives, with life that cannot be quenched or injured by calamity or any doom. He must be secure in the consciousness of life, certain that it is not perishing, and cannot perish, within him. Neither Jew nor Gentile had that security.

We may take as witness their literature. No one could say that the Old Testament is a happy book. It is lighted by gleams of hope. There are songs of rejoicing, and countless utterances of dogged confidence in a final victory of good, past all seeming. But it is shot through with these rather as a dark day of cloud and storm is shot through with gleams of sunshine. Its general tone is of judgment and retribution. There is thunder everywhere in the air. Its human story is in large part of man's vindictiveness. The story of God's dealings is mostly of His laws and vengeance. It is no gospel.

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The hints of good news for men gleam out confusedly from clouds of fear and terror. There is more promise in it of death than of life.

And no one, I think, could affirm that the literature of the Pagan world was a literature of happiness. Its best poetry, when it is not light and frivolous, is set in a tragic key, despairing of human life and ending with a great interrogation, however nobly uttered. The same is true of its best history and philosophy. The classics have moved men by ideals of truth and beauty and virtue. Homer and Æschylus and Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle, Horace and Virgil and Lucretius and Tacitus, could teach men much, give them much food and pleasure on the way, but they were never able to be in men's hands and hearts as books that opened to them the secret of the victory of life over death. They showed the world, to the end, as the scene of tragedy, most so when they were honestest and truest.

But the New Testament—the literature of the generation that woke with wondering eyes to faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ—is above all things happy, as is all the literature that has been born out of its inspiration up to this day. It comes from men passing through fires

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of tribulation and persecution—a despised and often outraged minority in a great world set against them. And yet it rings with joy, with the sense of triumph, certain, complete and final. It is no sad story. There are sad things in it. We must endure to read there of men bearing great sorrow of heart, of some men's awful sinning, of men dying under showers of stones and slain by the sword, of one man of perfect heart torn in the agony of Gethsemane, deserted and betrayed by His friends, and crucified. But the sad things are as discords in a piece of music which are resolved into glorious harmony. Here it is the brightness which is shot through with shafts of darkness, that pass to vanish into the light. And the joy and the brightness and the triumph come from this—that here is a message for men, which they have been able to receive and believe and prove for themselves in the experiment of living by it, of *life* poured into them which nothing can hinder or destroy. Death stands in front of them still, death as one of the facts of this present world, with its premonitory weakness and pains, sometimes its accompanying tortures. Still loved ones pass, one by one, out of their sight. Still the body decays. Still the passage through this world is a pilgrimage which ends at a portal where the

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gate opens only to those outgoing, to none returning, and allows none to see the mysteries hidden on the further side. But these men who have embraced this message of the Gospel are certain that they *live*, and that the passing of that portal is but an incident in life. This life of theirs is beyond the reach of harm. It is hid, they say, with Christ in God, and when Christ, who is their life, shall appear they also will appear with Him in glory.

And with this conviction of *life*, everything is changed for them in what we call living. This transmutes all values. Things that were great before became small now; some things that seemed small became great. Is it not bound to be so? Before, without Christ and His Gospel, men were all their time fighting for life, surrounded by tyrannous forces that were for ever threatening to deprive them of it, to thwart its peace, to hinder its fulness, and in front of them stood always the last grim spectre waiting to demand the last toll and take all away. Now they had life as a gift to them, life unassailable, which nothing in Heaven or earth could injure. They had come into intimate personal union with the Eternal Spirit of life. They were God's. God was *for* them. The things that loomed so large before, the troubles of this world, its losses

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and pains, these were small things. Now, they could not touch this life of theirs, they could only minister to it, giving it material on which to grow, over which to conquer. And yet, with that, the things of this world that had seemed small and insignificant, its opportunities and responsibilities, became magnified. The life secured to them, free from fear of being damaged by the assaults of the world, was free to spend itself in drawing good from the world and giving good to it. Released from the care of fighting for life, and the fear of losing it, men were free to fight for other things. Their living here had been lifted clean out of an earthly context into a heavenly. That is what Christ had done by His Gospel. He had brought life and immortality to light.

It is well that we should sometimes look back like this and try to see in the broad light of the New Testament record as a whole what it was that Jesus had done for men, looking at it as a fact of human history. He made men—those who believed the message—secure in their confidence in *life*, life eternal, begun here and now, life in God.

And Christianity has gone on being believed and proving itself worthy of men's acceptance, through all the centuries that have passed since

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the beginning, because people have been brought by it continually into that same confidence. It has shone into men's souls with the light of a Gospel indeed. It has been able to make them happy in the deepest sense. They have found themselves in union with the eternal God, in which is blessedness. It does that for men still. It does that for us—just in proportion as we receive and welcome it and put it to the proof. *To as many as received Him to them gave He power to become sons of God. Beloved now are we the sons of God. The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.* It is the Gospel of life—life which cannot fail or perish.

I am come that they might have life. Ye will not come unto Me that ye may have life. So the Fourth Evangelist reports Jesus Himself as saying. That was His mission, to give men life. And what a promise it is !

“ 'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
More life and fuller that we want.”

That is the truth about men always.

Now I have only one thing that I want to bring you to think of, and I am not going to try to philosophize or argue about it. It is

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this: that Jesus Christ brought that gift of *life* to men by going, of set purpose, to meet *death*. *He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem*. And we know the Gospels well enough to know that that is the meaning of it. Jerusalem meant death. He went to Jerusalem, not only with the prospect, but with the intention, of dying there.

The more we read the story of Jesus the more it comes home to us that the most astonishing thing of all in it, the thing which removes Jesus farthest away in uniqueness from all others we have ever read or heard of, is the fact that He took this dying at the hands of men as a purpose. That is most wonderful. And it must be true. It is woven into the whole narrative. Early in the story, in the days of His success and popularity as a teacher in Galilee, when the storm clouds of opposition had hardly begun to gather, we read of His defending His disciples against the Pharisees' rebuke because they did not fast, by comparing them with the bridegroom's friends who could not be mournful while the bridegroom was with them. *But the day will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them*. When the clouds had begun to lower, and He had withdrawn more and more into solitude with His disciples to concentrate on teaching them and

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preparing them for their work in coming days, after Peter had confessed his belief that He was the Messiah, He startled them all by beginning to tell them plainly that He must go to Jerusalem and be rejected and killed. He took three of them apart to share with Him a vigil of prayer on a hill by night. They had a remarkable experience of seeing Him transfigured to a form of dazzling brightness, and hearing Him in converse with Moses and Elijah. And what they heard them talk of was the death which He should "accomplish" at Jerusalem. And as the story draws on to its close, more and more persistently this is in it : Jesus is certain that He must die. It is on the path marked out for Him which He must tread. We have it in the parable which He told to His enemies of the wicked husbandmen who slay their master's son—the last messenger sent to them to recall them to their duty. Jesus knows He has a baptism to be baptized with and a cup to drink; He is straitened till it be accomplished; He is shut up to it by a divine constraint. It is the baptism in the waters of death, it is the cup of the shedding of His own life blood. And when He sits to keep the Passover with His disciples, He draws them into a final, loving covenant with Himself and with His Father by the cup which

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He bids them drink henceforward in remembrance of Him, and says it is the covenant in His blood. The Son of Man is come, He had said before, to give His life a ransom for many.

As we try to think into the story, this is the most wonderful thing in all the life of Jesus. This makes Him stand truly alone. We may compare His teaching with that of others and not be sure that His words are absolutely unique. His example of integrity and unselfishness, that may perhaps be paralleled in others who have been great and good, faithful and devoted even to death. His mighty works of compassionate power, these are not without analogies in other records. But in Jesus we find all this, this high teaching, this pure example, this compassionate power, along with something unparalleled—the purpose to die, that thereby men may live. *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die, it beareth much fruit.*

That is what makes the death of Jesus different from—something more than—a martyr's death. Socrates was willing to die, believing that gain might come to others from his death. So has been many another. Jesus was *determined* to die. *Therefore doth the Father love me*—the Fourth Gospel lets us hear Him say again—

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because I lay down my life. No man taketh it from me. I lay it down of myself. Men did take it from Him. It was by their cruelty that He was betrayed and crucified. Yet it was His own deliberate offering. He knew He must die. He died of choice. This was His purpose. He shrank from death, yet He went to find it. It was not a fate He had to suffer ; it was a work He had to do. Now is my soul troubled and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour. Yet for this cause came I unto this hour. Father glorify thy name. Did ever any other man pray like that ?

He set his face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem. We touch mystery there. Here we have the co-operation of a human will with the divine purpose in a way that passes our comprehension. We can only wonder at the fact and accept it. We know that life has come for men out of Jesus going thus to death. The love of God, uniting them to Himself, has reached them at the cross of Jesus. Jesus knew that it must and would be so. He was human, and all the circumstances of His death were human circumstances. Yet He was so much of one mind and heart with God, His Father, as that. His death was the deed of man's sin, but it was the deliberate deed of God's love.

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I am asking you to think about this on Palm Sunday. The day recalls for us that triumphal procession winding up the hill into the holy city, Jesus riding in the midst as a king of peace, the people singing their hosannas. He was going to Jerusalem. And He chose to accept the people's fickle homage and to go there as a king. For He was indeed coming to reign, to reign as only one who has the power to give the greatest gift of God, the gift of life abundant, can reign over men. He was entering Jerusalem to take up that kingdom. He was going to His coronation. He was ascending the throne from which He should give men that gift of life. But He was going to die. Only out of death could that life come.

“ Ride on, ride on, in majesty !
In lowly pomp ride on *to die*.
O Christ, Thy triumphs now begin
O'er captive death and conquered sin.
Ride on ! Ride on in majesty !
In lowly pomp ride on *to die*.
Bow Thy meek head to mortal pain ;
Then take, O God, Thy power and reign.”

What does it mean ? Not for theology, not for theory, but for the business of our living ?

It means that we have been loved with an everlasting love ; that God, the eternal source

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and Lord of all the worlds, cares that we should live with life abundant; that He has done and given the uttermost that love can do and give that we might come to life with Him. Christ died for us.

It means that we are debtors. Was that the love of God in Christ—that made Him set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, to that death? Was it? Then love for *whom*? For others, but not for *us*? Are *we* not in debt to it? *We love because He first loved us.*

“ Oh, 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love,
The love of Christ to me;
It brought my Saviour from above
To die on Calvary.”

“ This have I done for thee: what hast thou done for Me? ” Is that not something that concerns our everyday living? What are we going out from here to do? How are we going to act and speak and think to-day, to-morrow, all the coming days, in work and holiday? Are we going to live for ourselves, or for God? We are debtors.

And it means that we know how our debt must be paid. *Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* We have been saved

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for life, because He went up to death; and life here means service and sacrifice in love to others, following Him.

Hold back nothing. Give royally. Count not your lives dear unto yourselves. Go after Christ. Love Him. Show your love for Him in the only way you can, the only way He asks—by loving men, loving them most where they are most in need, for His sake. *He that loveth his life shall lose it: he that loseth his life for my sake and the Gospel's the same shall find it.* And to us, if we believe in Him and love Him and follow Him, He says, *Because I live, ye shall live also.*

THE PURPOSE OF LENT

BY THE REV. E. A. DOWN, M.A.
Hon. Canon of Southwark

*"I will hearken what the Lord God will say
concerning me."*—Psalm lxxxv. 8.

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(1) THERE is good reason for thinking that the psalm from which these words are taken was written shortly after the return of the exiles from Babylon. This signal act of the divine lovingkindness was generally interpreted as a pledge of God's continued favour. The poem opens, therefore, with a thankful acknowledgment of His mercy in restoring them to the beloved home of their ancestors. It was a proof to them that the offences of God's people had been forgiven, their sins covered, the divine displeasure removed, and that the wrathful displeasure under which they suffered had been turned away.

But there were some disquieting signs on the horizon which filled their minds with apprehension. It was but a feeble remnant, a mere handful of the captives, that had returned, and they found themselves "in great affliction and reproach." The national life had not revived, and the great hopes held out by the prophets had not been realized. They were confronted, in fact, on all sides with opposition

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and discouragement. It was but to a desolate land, and to a forsaken city, that they had come back. The walls of Jerusalem were thrown down; its gates were burnt with fire; and jealous enemies were constantly on the watch to assail them. That is why the note of triumph passes so quickly into the more subdued language of prayer.

“ Turn us then, O God our Saviour ;
And let thine anger cease from us.
Wilt thou be displeased at us for ever,
And wilt thou stretch out thy wrath from one
generation to another ?
Wilt thou not turn again and quicken us,
That thy people may rejoice in thee ?
Show us thy mercy, O Lord,
And grant us thy salvation.”

In spite of such gloomy forebodings, however, they feel sure that there is a more glorious future in store for them. “ The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” “ The vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay.” Herein lies the solid ground of their confidence. They have only to wait in calm and quiet expectation for what God has to teach them, and the divine answer is bound to come

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back in the language of renewed hope and reassurance.

(2) "I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me." But these words admit of a far wider application. They represent an attitude, in fact, which has been very common among the most saintly characters in every age. Our thoughts travel back to Abraham, "the father of all them that believe," called to leave his "country, his kindred, and his father's house," and the ready response with which the call was obeyed as "he went out, not knowing whither he went." Or we think of Samuel, the little temple acolyte, roused from his slumbers in the Tabernacle to bear an unwelcome message and to undertake an irksome task, and of his faithful answer, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." Or we recall the story of another boy in later times who received his summons under far different circumstances. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" was the opportunity which befell Isaiah, and it was met by the prompt resolve of unquestioning obedience, "Here am I, send me." Or to come down to much later times, we remember that striking scene on the Damascus road, when Saul, the persecuting Pharisee, was struck to the ground "trembling and astonished," together with the

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question which rose instinctively to his lips, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Or once again, and most wonderful of all, there was that "answer of Mary's profound and humble obedience to the greatest call ever addressed from heaven to a mortal creature; a call to prepare for being the instrument of the final and complete accomplishment of God's highest words and most amazing acts; a call to be the human mother of the Eternal Son"—together with the absolute self-surrender and perfect readiness for all that might be required of her, as she replied, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." The Psalter, likewise, is full of similar aspirations. "Show me thy ways, O Lord: and teach me thy paths. . . . Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee, for thou art my God. . . . Show thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto thee."

(3) "I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me." But this attitude of patient expectancy which God Almighty requires of His creatures at all times, is peculiarly the kind of spirit in which we should embark upon the season of Lent. For what is the purpose which lies behind these solemn weeks? We are too apt to connect them with the performance of a

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number of irritating little rules which make serious inroads upon our comfort and ordinary occupations. Not, of course, that one would be understood as desiring to disparage such restrictions on our inclinations—nay, human nature being what it is, it is difficult to see how, under ordinary circumstances, we could secure our true end without them. But the point is, that we need to keep steadily in front of us the result which Lent is intended to produce in our lives, and not merely the method by which we reach it. For what we ought to aim at is this: to get into closer communication with God; and this can be accomplished only in so far as we gain a greater mastery over sin and self. What the Church invites us to do, therefore, is to go with our Lord in spirit into the wilderness, and wrestle out the great problems which surround our life without the intervention of those ordinary pursuits and pleasures which (though quite innocent and harmless in themselves) tend to warp the judgment and weaken the will. We want to make ourselves more conscious of our real condition in God's sight, somewhat in the same way as Newman describes his own state in the early pages of the *Apologia*, where he speaks of certain convictions as influences in "isolating him from the objects which surrounded him,

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in confirming him in his mistrust of the reality of material phenomena, and making him rest in the thought of two, and two only, absolute and luminously self-evident beings, himself and his Creator."

It has been often noticed how frequently God's most striking manifestations have been made to mankind when they were called away from the world to be alone with themselves and their Maker. It was so with Moses when he was summoned to spend those mysterious days on Sinai before receiving the Law. It was so with Elijah when he was driven to Horeb, and lodged in the cave, that he might learn now God was neither in the strong wind which rent the mountains, nor in the earthquake, nor yet in the fire, but in the "still small voice." It was the way in which God prepared St. John the Baptist for his great mission in life. of whom we read that he "was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." Or we think of the Apostles in the Upper Room "continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication," as their preparation for receiving the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost; or of St. Paul spending his three years in Arabia, ere God commissioned him to proclaim his great message of salvation to the Gentiles; or of St. John living an exile in Patmos,

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as the condition for looking through the open door of heaven on revelations which disclosed "the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." But we can point to an example far higher than any of these, since we notice how each crisis in our Saviour's life was preceded by a period of retirement. Thirty years were spent in the seclusion of Nazareth before He entered on the three short years of His ministry. Forty days were passed in the desert, in conflict with Satan, before He was fully equipped for the work which the Father had given Him to do. A whole night in prayer on the mountain-side formed a prelude to the solemn task of selecting His Twelve Apostles; while the Wednesday in Holy Week was regarded, apparently, as a kind of quiet retreat at Bethany before facing the awful task which reached its climax in Gethsemane and on the Cross.

That, surely, is the right way of looking at Lent. God, we may be quite sure, if only we place ourselves in the attitude of listeners, has some message to disclose to each one of us. It is no small part of prayer to listen for God's voice, since prayer includes not only speaking to Him, but also waiting for His answer. It is a kind of intercourse or communion in which all the talking should not be on our side. It

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includes the duty and the privilege of a childlike attitude which tries to hear what God has to say. It is for this reason that it becomes so important to secure a few quiet moments each day away from the noise, and the bustle, and the distractions of our ordinary life, so that we may not only realize what God wants us to do, but may resolutely determine to perform it.

(4) "I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me." It would be futile, of course, to try and sketch out a rule which would be suitable for everybody, since its details must be determined by various conditions of age, health, habits, which are peculiar to each of us. There are certain underlying principles, nevertheless, which are more or less applicable to us all. Anyhow, the Church seems to suggest three main lines, or directions, in which fresh effort should be made.

(a) First, there is Prayer, both public and private. How difficult we all find it to pray! Nor does it become simpler as life goes on. Everybody seems to imagine that prayer is easier for other people than for themselves, and that we are the only people who find it hard to pray. The trial, however, is almost universal, and it is well that we should recognize the fact. It is wise in most cases, probably, to add very little to our

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ordinary prayers, and to concentrate our attention on trying to say them much better and more thoughtfully than we usually do. If only we could succeed in repeating them more slowly, in fixing our thoughts on what we say, and in meaning the words which our lips may utter, what a difference it would make to our life ! It was the late Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury who said that " no man was likely to do much good at prayer, who did not begin by looking upon it in the light of a work, to be prepared for, and persevered in, with all the earnestness which we bring to bear upon subjects which are, in our opinion, at once most interesting and most necessary." That might well be the kind of spirit which should mark our prayers in Lent.

(*b*) Then there is *fasting*, about which it would be impossible to speak except in quite general terms. Let us realize, however, that it is of universal obligation. Our Lord fasted Himself, He assumes that all His disciples will do so, and He puts it side by side (in the Sermon on the Mount) with other duties from which no serious Christian would wish to excuse himself. Its application, nevertheless, must be governed by considerations of health, age, opportunity, occupation; and it is a point which must be left primarily to each one's conscience, and to the

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judgment of those whom God has appointed to guide them.

(c) And there is *almsgiving*. Possibly we can give much, or else it may be little that we can give; but at least it can involve something in the way of real self-denial. This is a duty, probably, which we connect too little with our religion, in spite of the emphasis which is laid upon it by our Lord. But almsgiving is a *religious* act, without which any true religion must be defective.

(5) "I will hearken what the Lord God shall say concerning me." Harkening, however, is profitless unless followed by obedience. The expectation of a message must be accompanied by a fixed resolve to accept its obligations, whatever they cost. In theory, at any rate, most of us would like to make religion the *main* business of our life; but theory must be transfigured into practice. There are so many other competing interests which claim to absorb our attention, and our hearts become in danger of being crowded with so many other things that God is constrained to take a secondary place. But God will never be satisfied with a divided allegiance. You must put Him first, or nowhere. This does not mean, of course, that we must always be on our knees, nor that we must always

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be thinking and talking about religion; but it *does* mean that religion ought to be the secret and inspiration of our whole life. Our work, our study, our friendships, our correspondence, our tastes, our recreations—these all can be, and must be, bathed in the cleansing waters of a religious motive. Our prayers, our worship, the sacraments, should colour all that we do, even what seems to be the most secular occupation. It is fatal to shut off parts of our life from God, and divide it up into watertight compartments. There is nothing, except sin, which is not capable of consecration—our memory, our thoughts, our imagination, our pleasures, our conversation—they all can be brought beneath the consecrating touch of Jesus Christ. The great thing is that God should get the chance of making His will known to us in Lent; that we should listen to what He has to say; and above all, that we are resolved to carry out in our lives any demand which may be made on our obedience by Him to whom we belong, and in whose service alone is perfect freedom.

Yout
11/12/1928

ON THE ART OF THINKING IN
TERMS OF THE CROSS

BY THE REV. ARTHUR JOHN GOSSIP, M.A.
Aberdeen

We preach Christ crucified
unto the Jews a stumbling block,
and unto the Greeks foolishness,
but unto them which are called
— the power of God
— 1 Cor. 1:23-24

*"Any one who does not take up his cross and fol-
low where I lead is not worthy of me."—Matt.
x. 38. (Weymouth.)*

On the Art of Thinking in Terms of the Cross

Is it not fearsomely easy to come to take the Cross for granted; really to forget about it, and to be no different because that tremendous fact is there?

In every village in our land, that day its War Memorial was unveiled a wild surge of emotion rose up chokingly in every heart. And for weeks after nobody could see it except through eyes grown suddenly dim. But now the women coming from the well set down their pails under its very shadow, and chatter eagerly about the little nothings of their little world, and scarcely so much as remember it is there. And so our heedless eyes can run unarrested over that Cross that all our days has been a bit of our mental landscape. It has been always there, and so we barely notice it.

Sometimes, indeed, we do grow hot-faced because this amazing thing does not haunt us, claim us, lay compulsion on us, as we feel it ought to do. And now and then—at a Communion, or at a Good Friday service, or, thank

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God, upon occasion for no very definite reason and at quite ordinary times, the mists lift and scatter. And, staringly, it looks at us, how real, how near, how awesome, till our hushed hearts hold their breath. But the fog soon closes down again, and it fades out; and we forget once more.

How are we to avoid this dull, unseeing callousness? How can the Cross become really effective in our lives?

Well, I suppose that in most homes in Jerusalem, after that Passover when Jesus died, things moved on just as usual; that the worshippers from elsewhere scattered, each of them back to the life that he had left, and continued the pattern of that with no very noticeable break. Even Pilate, according to Anatole France, by and by remembered nothing about that little incident that for the moment had worried him. For other matters, closer to him in point of time, and more important as he estimated things, or at least touching his own interests more nearly, jostled it from his mind.

But there was one at least who would not, and could not, forget—that worthy man who, coming into town on his own business by the Calvary road, chanced, just where it dips down into the city, upon a clustered knot of folk, and among them here and there the glint of

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helmets glittering in the sunshine; and, pushing in to see what it was all about, found that a prisoner had more or less collapsed under His Cross; and, seeing that was all, was, no doubt, turning to go upon his way when a hand fell on his shoulder. "Hie, you! Lend a hand here! Here's the man for the job!" And with that he was being hauled and hustled into the centre; and they were laying the Cross upon his shoulder—how he shuddered at the touch of the grim thing—were steadying it—"Grip it, man, can't you! There now!"—were roughly bidding him move on. It was in vain that he protested he was going the other way, and that he had urgent duties waiting for him; in vain that he cried out indignantly that it was a gross outrage that he, a respectable citizen, should be so villainously insulted and demeaned, paraded through the streets as if he were a condemned felon on the way to execution. "Do you expect us to carry the thing?" the soldiers growled. "Not likely, on a day as hot as this! On with you! or perhaps you'll know more about a cross than the weight of it before you are many moments older!" And, with a burning face, and a heart seething with rage and shame, he had to do their bidding. No! he would not forget, would talk of it until the day he died, with the

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old fierceness flaming out uncooled. Or if, as it appears, Simon became a Christian, ah ! then still less could he forget. For every time he sinned a sin would not he cry out, Miserable me ! Is it not enough that I had an unwilling share in my Lord's crucifixion ; that these very hands of mine held the Cross to which I saw them nail Him down, and this my shoulder, accursed to the end of time, carried it for Him yonder to the place of horror ? I ! I did that ! And now once more I must hurt Him, and take sides against Him, and break His heart afresh. Or, with a change of mood, when some sacrifice was asked of him, would not he break out into happy exultation ? In the mysterious providence of God, He gave to me a share in the salvation of the world, yes, even me, enabled me to make it all a little less hard for the Saviour. And now again He grants me a new opportunity of helping Christ, of close comradeship with Him in His sorrow. No, he would not forget ! But all his days, for him at least, it would remain vivid and real.

And Thomas à Kempis tells us, getting very near the heart of things, that if you and I wish the Cross of Christ to come home and grow real to us, we also shall effect that best, not by arguing about its meaning, not even by long brooding on it in a hush of spirit, but by carrying it after

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Him—we, too. And how? Each of us must of course particularize that for himself. There are sins, our individual sins, that each of us must crucify in Jesus' strength : and sacrifices, our personal sacrifices, that each of us must make for Jesus' sake. But, for complete success, we need something less spasmodic and occasional, broader and more general, than that. The spirit of the Cross must, as it were, be soaked into the very stuff and fibre of our mind. It must become the standard by which we judge everything, the background before which our whole life is enacted, so that that solemn shadow falls across it all, and tells on every incident.

The war has radically changed us as a people in many ways, not least in this that it gave us a new standard of measurement. In the old days, the mass of us had a small wage and meagre incomes, thought in little sums; and what nowadays seem trifling figures sounded then huge and staggering and impossible. But the reckless flinging about for years of hundreds of millions, and much glib talk of really unimaginable monies, have altered the whole scale of people's thinking, made us by far larger in view and bigger in outlook, more wasteful and extravagant. In these times a mere million or two seems a negligible thing. And the Cross ought

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to have changed us, too. Before it was set up, our standards were far lower. Duty, uprightness, honour, these seemed tremendous calls upon us then. But the generous prodigality of Christ's self-sacrifice, once it is seen, alters the whole scale of one's thinking. Here, as elsewhere, what Wordsworth says is true, that a life given for truth becomes a law of nature for the rest of us. In view of that we daren't live on in the old way, for this new fact has made that out of date. Or so at least it ought to be. But, in hard fact, our problem is just this, that obstinately we still live in the old obsolete fashion, with the old cramped ideas of what becomes us, and the old niggardliness of view. We have not learned the habit of thinking in terms of the Cross, of applying that in all things as our standard, of carrying it after Christ through all the multitudinous details of our daily life, of putting those through, as each of them arises, in the spirit of that. And yet until we learn that art, we are not really Christians. What would you say to making for Calvary from a new direction ; following not the beaten way to it, but a round-about, little frequented, grass-grown path, hardly a bridle track? For, coming on it from that unfamiliar angle, it might strike us as it does not do now, viewed from where we have seen it all our lives.

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Well, hidden away in a forgotten nook of the Old Testament is one of the most daring flights alike of Scripture sarcasm and Scripture faith. A brave man, Zechariah, was attempting what appeared to be a hopeless task, to rekindle an enthusiasm that had died away, been stamped out into blackness and cold ashes, so that not one spark of it remained; to rouse again the very hopes which folk were feeling bitterly had fooled them of their lives; and which, so they alleged, they had already proved to be impossible. And indeed it was some twenty years since they had set out from their exile and captivity in Babylon, with what enthusiasm and high leaping flames of confidence and hope; since, with bewildered thanksgiving to God, they who but yesterday when they lay down had been a broken people with no future, a mere crushed group of serfs lost in the crowds of mighty Babylon, had wakened up to find themselves free folk again, and with their faces once more turned towards home, ah ! with what lofty dreams and bold assurances ! For they were going to rebuild Jerusalem; to restore the ruined Temple; to rally Jewry once more round it into a great people, and set up again the fallen glories of the race in more than the old splendour. And it was all so real to them, so sure, so near ! Yet,

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that was twenty years ago; and not one of their dreams had grown into reality, not even one ! They had indeed, two little groups of them, struggled through the long deserts, fearful and harassed and often all but blotted out; still they had reached their goal. But more than that they could not do. For although twenty years had come and gone since then, and the young heads that dreamed the big dreams were now growing grey, still Jerusalem lay in her ruins, more or less; still the wild beasts prowled through the fallen Temple courts; still they themselves were, not a mighty people with wide-spreading territory, but a little huddle of famine-stricken folk, encamped precariously there amid the debris and black ashes of their ruined greatness, and hard be-sted by the insolent tribesmen round about. All hope and expectation had long died away; and they had sunk for years into a sullen resignation to their lot, had become half-content with it, at least accustomed to it, so that it no longer stung them. Till God sent among them the manful voices of Haggai and Zechariah ringing out the old intolerable longings, stirring the old memories, urging them on to the old lofty hopes.

But this time it was doubly difficult. For when every hand was needed in the work, at least

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half of the people were mere idle critics and wet blankets, scoffing and jeering at whatever was attempted; or at least sadly shaking pessimistic heads, and confidently prophesying failure and disaster. Were the foundations of the Temple once more laid? Ah! this will never be like the old Temple of our day, they croaked. How poor and cramped and shabby this is going to be! Did they restart the long-neglected task of rebuilding the city? What is the use? these others muttered. At best anything that we can raise must be, not a great capital, like that of which fools who will not face ugly facts still dream, but a mere paltry provincial town, like any other country town. Till Zechariah both summed up and answered all this murmuring and faithlessness and discontent in one vivid picture of a fatuous youth blandly proposing to measure the immeasurable with a foot-rule! "And I saw a young man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And the angel that talked with me said, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem will be a mighty city that will overflow whatever walls are built for it, whatever boundaries are set it; will grow

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yet more and more and more. And you propose to measure this with that futile yard-stick of yours !”

That is a piece of sarcasm that never becomes out of date, but which requires to be repeated year by year. For this poor creature, with his absurd measuring-stick, is never far away. What generous movement has not, at its rise, to run the gauntlet of his suspicion and belittlement and confident predictions that, talk how they like, it will end in little or nothing.

And it is no small part of our duty as Christian people to be done with that; to escape from this mania of valuing things by their sensible size, or by the world's crude standards; to lay aside yard-sticks and foot-rules and the like, to turn to the Cross of Christ, and in all our thinking measure things by that.

So to do lands one in a singular world, where the relative importances of what lies about us have been strangely altered. Some things that loomed up huge and imposing grow suddenly dwarfed, shrinking into paltry nothings. For example, you have grievances, sore grievances, and slights, real slights; and you can't forget and can't forgive them, so you say. You know that Plutarch warns us that anger is a mist that magnifies things oddly out of all proportion to their actual size. But it is not so in this case,

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so you cry doggedly. Here there is no exaggeration. You are aware that our Lord lays it down inexorably that, without exception, and time after time, however trying people prove, we on our side must seek to maintain the old friendly feelings towards them, that He makes that an absolute condition of our own forgiveness at God's hands, so that, as Johnson says, if we harbour a mood of ill-will towards any one at all, because of that, for us "the throne of mercy is inaccessible, and the Saviour of the world is born in vain." And yet, perhaps, even so knowing, your heart remains hard and implacable, won't change. But let the shadow of the Cross fall across our injury and sore, let us take in the wonder of our own forgiveness by a God whom we have so grievously and repeatedly insulted, heaping up wrongs against Him day by day, let us see ourselves as that hot, angry creature of Christ's parable seizing his fellow by the throat, demanding instant payment of his trumpery bill of twenty pounds, he who has just had cancelled his own staggering debt of some three millions, has his discharge for that, there in his pocket, given him not half an hour ago, and the thing grows impossible, and our anger dies away. For what had seemed so huge that it filled our whole mind looks upon Calvary how trifling !

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And so with the world's prizes and the like. Elsewhere it seems natural and well worth our while to give ourselves for these. But beside the Cross so to do seems as unseemly as the rattling of the dice-box yonder, where men, cursing, laughing, quarrelling, are gaming for the poor perquisites before Christ's dying eyes. Face to face with Him can you do only that with life?

So in a hundred things, if you would see them in their true proportions, measure them, not with that preposterous yard-stick of yours, but by Christ's Cross.

But there are many matters which so measured become, not dwarfed, but bigger by far than we had realized.

Take sin, your daily sins and trespasses, and mine. There was a time when that lay across life dark and terrible, appalling as an eclipse's threatening shadow, a fearsome and immeasurable horror. But in our day we have applied the foot-rule to it, and discovered it is no great matter after all. There is the length of it, and there the breadth of it, we say, the merest bagatelle that need disquiet no one. Maeterlinck pictures God as sitting on a sunny mountain smiling at our gravest offences as only the naughtiness of puppies playing on the hearthrug. And many an one who is a little startled at that is living

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life in such a way as proves that he believes it true. What do we care about our selfishness or outbursts of temper? Do we not rise from them and go our way, and clean forget about such trifles altogether? Ah! but the yard-stick cannot measure everything. For some things we require the Cross of Christ. And with that in our mind how dreadful our sins grow, our little daily trespasses and falls. Not sitting on a sunny mountain do we see God now, but bowed in agony within the darkness round the Cross where His uttermost self-sacrifice was just enough to save us, and no more. For God gave all God's all. And every bit of it was needed. And not smiling at our worst offences as at mere playful naughtiness, but wounded to the quick by it, and so determined that this hideous horror must take end that He accounts no loss, no sacrifice, no sorrow to Himself too vast if thereby it can be obliterated, and eagerly goes through them all for you and me. Look at the Cross, if you would measure sin aright, your little daily trespasses and falls; look at its cost to God; look at the man Christ Jesus on the tree, and take it in that is the perfect picture of how God always is affected by it, every time so hurt, so wounded, so heartbroken! So will you grasp its hideousness and horror.

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and be filled with loathing for this awful thing. Our one chance, Newman thought, is that we be shocked by sin. Look upon Him whom we have pierced, and surely that must shock us, till we hate what caused Him that, fly from it, find a new power surging up within us that gives the strength to cast it forth, and make an end of it.

Or take the biggest thing in the whole universe, the deepest, the most inexhaustible, God's love. How busy we have been all down the ages with our wretched little footrules upon that, complacently measuring the immeasurable, marking it off—this is its length, and this its breadth—fixing the bounds and limits of this illimitable thing, setting up barriers which we declare it never passes, and marks which we say with assurance it can never overflow, declaring confidently this and that it cannot overlook, and that and this it never does, judging of God, in short, by our own petulant, foolish, sullen, earthy human hearts !

For my part I am done with that. Isn't it amazing, this assurance with which we little creatures talk of the deep things, forgetful that even in this dust-speck of a world of ours so many wonders are constantly happening of which we know and can know nothing at all, because we have no senses with which to pick them up.

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We can see, for we have eyes; can hear, for we have ears. But to how much as real as beauty or as music, we must remain impervious. And is it not ridiculous that we, so limited in our equipment, should claim to be, of course, able to plumb the unfathomable thoughts and all wise ways of God !

You have looked into a tiny pool and watched small insects wriggling at the bottom of that, their whole world. And you and I, are we not also petty creatures, hardly larger, crawling about the bottom of a little pool of air—some three miles deep or so—an infinitesimal pond in this huge universe ? And yet we dare to take the love of God into our puny hands, and talk of that bewilderment as if we can see over it, and under it, and on all sides of it, and round and round about it, this thing so tremendous, so unreckonable, that Paul declares that it will take the whole of us, throwing in all our experiences into a common heap, even to glimpse an adequate hint of what, even then, will prove by far too overwhelming for our human minds really to grasp at all. Stand by the Cross, and surely you must see that what God means by loving is an amazement we can never understand, a thing that has no ends nor bounds nor limits anywhere. What it can do, or cannot do, I

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do not know. But after my experience of it, anything seems possible. All that is sure is that we, one and all, even the worst of us, yes, this whole blundering earth of ours, are hemmed in and surrounded by this unthinkably glorious thing, so strong, so patient, so enduring, so not to be shaken off, that however desperately we have failed Him, that however often we have thwarted Him, that however far we may have wandered from Him, God still loves us; and that there is no place in all His universe where that love of His is but a faded memory of what once was but is not any more; that even though men make their beds in hell, God, who is love, and cannot cease from loving, loves them even there.

Have you allowed your sins, your doubts, your fearfulnesses to persuade you that He has grown cold to you, must have grown cold? Well, it is natural enough, for you and I would not have stood one tithe of such deliberate and impudent wrong as we have done to God. And yet, lay down your little human footrule, and turn to the Cross, and measure this by that. Do you not see it was for those who were His enemies Christ died? Do you not understand the parable of these arms spread so wide upon the Cross, that anybody, everybody may be gathered

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in? Do you not grasp, not even here, how dear you are to God, that He shrinks back from nothing that can help and save you? Don't measure Divine love by our poor human thoughts, and ways, and hesitations, and supposings, but by the Cross of Christ. And you will find, however poor a thing you are, it stretches out to you: however vast your need be, it can meet it all.

Or take it of our fellow men. They tell me that there are uninteresting people in the world. For my part I have never been unfortunate enough to meet them. Still, have it as you say. Certainly Anatole France in his final look round upon life gave it as his verdict that there is at least one thing of which we can be absolutely sure, that men are always smaller than they seem. Not so thought Christ. Not smaller, always bigger; that was His confident assumption. Yet in truth it is a little difficult at times not to lose patience with them. In the herd they seem so slow to rouse to high enthusiasm, can be so woefully ungenerous, are so apt to be easily fooled by any glib-tongued trickster, that they tire out our sympathy. And we ourselves, the mass of us, are far from clever, are indeed a little dull and stupid, are we not? At least we are very ordinary people, whose tame, uneventful

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lives consist of a round of petty nothings, whose interests are very limited, whose conversation hops futilely enough, like a canary in a narrow cage, back and to, and back again, between a little spar or two, even in this wonderful world crowded with thronging interests. Well, certainly it does not sound exciting ! And no doubt at all some personalities do seem colourless and drab. But lay aside your footrule; think in terms of the Cross; and, ah ! how that changes our estimate ! In the New Testament, when people are provoking and impossible, the Apostles never tried to explain the ugly facts away. Yes, they agreed at once: and still Christ loved them. That is their sole argument; and is it not enough ? Once in Annandale there was a plain old peasant woman, crouching over her cottage fire. And you would not have looked at her a second time. But had somebody whispered, "That is Carlyle's mother," with what a new respect you would have treated her. And she was worthy of it. Ask her famous son. And there is not one among all we meet but is a friend of Jesus Christ, or might be, would he take the honour. No, not one. And that does make us look at them with other eyes. "I couldn't love him, but his mother did," declared Pompilia of her black-guard husband. And the thought of that came

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to her as a corrective, softening her own rising bitterness against him. So when people seem narrow and bigoted or hopelessly unreasonable, I couldn't love them, but Christ does; and knowing that, I, too, can do it; see they are far bigger than I thought; and gladly give my life for them whom Christ esteemed worthy of all His all.

Or take it of our use of life, our work for God, our efforts to justify our existence. Tut, we cry, busy with our tape measures, what would it all amount to, anything I have to offer? What possible difference could I make in this mighty world-wide conflict between good and evil? I might perhaps teach a class of half a dozen unattractive urchins; or look in on an old soul now and then; or trudge round a collecting district, or the like. But such a petty thing could never tell upon the general struggle.

Yet to attempt to measure what God's grace can do through our poor efforts is the maddest folly. Is it so small a thing to bend and tinge and make even one of those little minds, though all the rest remain impervious to all your efforts all the years? "I can't realize that I should ever be so honoured of God," writes Smetham; "I can go on working, I can sow a little, I can add my labour to the heap, in hope that among other

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agencies I may help rather than retard. But to save a soul as the direct result of my personal effort!" And yet that august possibility lies open to us all. And we can never tell. For momentous happenings have a way of slipping in through unwatched doors, where indeed there seems to be no opening at all. Has not Gore told us that he, brought up in a Protestant atmosphere, had his mind turned in the new direction it has followed ever since, by a forgotten tale—if I do not misunderstand him, a child's story—on which he chanced as a boy? How much has flowed from that! Didn't a certain Black Friar one day open his heart to a youth? He is forgotten, and yet he made Scotland. For his words gripped, haunted, laid compulsion on John Knox! And didn't a disappointed man in an Argyleshire glen, with nothing to encourage him, keep on teaching his dwindling class year in, year out? And have not the ends of the earth good cause to honour him because one day one little lad, as he sat there and listened, made up his mind to be what he became, James Chalmers of New Guinea, whom Stevenson so envied?

Ah! put away your footrule. It is out of place and makes you look ridiculous. Go, tell that young man with his grotesque yard-stick

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yonder, quick, hide it out of sight, for you are setting out to measure the immeasurable with a footrule !

In any case, and let the visible result be what it may, this at least is certain, that you can help and hearten Jesus Christ ; and that He takes these little services as personal kindnesses done toward Himself. Old Dr. Duncan used to say that, if he had been given his choice of any rôle in history, he would have chosen to be the angel sent to strengthen Our Lord in His Agony. Yet even that tremendous task is open to us all. Come to the Cross, and standing here beneath it, look up into Christ's face, and do you grudge Him anything that you can give and do ? There was a bluff but kindly soldier who held up a sponge with vinegar to the poor parched lips. " Let be," the others cried. But he would not desist : rough fellow though he was, he did what he could for Christ.

And you, can you stand here unmoved ; and hugging your life close, say snarlingly " No, it is mine, and I must have the whole of it all for myself," and spare Him nothing ? Standing here beside the gift of His whole life for you, dare you, and can you, and do you ?

Surely the most thorough way to carry Christ's Cross after Him is to get it so into our minds

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that it becomes our rule, our norm, our standard in all things, a kind of watermark that shows through all we think and are and do.

So will it grow at last effective in our lives :
so shall we really prove our gratitude to Christ ;
so will He see with gladness it was not in vain
He died.

THE AMAZING CHRIST

BY THE REV. H. MALDWYN HUGHES, D.D.
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"They were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed, but some as they followed were afraid."—(R.V. marg.) Mark x. 32.

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IT is well that during Lent we should follow Jesus along the way that led to the Cross. The text indicates a strange experience which came to the disciples. The Master's concentration of their minds on the things of the Kingdom, during the last few weeks of His earthly life, must have been very intense. Jesus had, at the most, only three short years in which to teach them. No wonder that they were slow of understanding ! Nineteen centuries have passed away, and despite the countless interpreters of Christ who have arisen, we have not, even yet, fully grasped or assimilated the teaching of Jesus. But the disciples had to grasp it in three short years. In the earlier months they were hardly awake to the magnitude of the enterprise to which they had committed themselves. The last few weeks were a time of concentrated and intensive teaching, and as He steadfastly led them along the way that could only end at Calvary, they were amazed and afraid. If we, too, follow Him to the Cross we shall share the amazement and the fear of the Twelve.

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I. THE WONDER WHICH CHRIST ENGENDERS.

There is nothing more vital to the Christian life than to keep the sense of wonder alive. A dull and deadly sense of familiarity is one of the worst foes of the spiritual life. In the Gospels there is a Temple of Wonder, but very often the gates are closed to us—self-closed. The Gospel story is one of our earliest recollections. Now we read it and take everything as a matter of course. We feel that it is a very beautiful story. Sometimes, perhaps, the incidents are a little surprising, but there is nothing that pulls us up rudely and violently, nothing that gives us a shock, nothing that makes us gasp with astonishment. It is all part of a very old story with which the world has become familiarized.

Sunrise in Alpine regions awakens the wonder of the tourist. But the ordinary inhabitant does not trouble to lift the blinds and look out of the window. And Jesus may evoke wonder in the Eastern or African who has never heard of Him before, but to most of us, His followers, He has become a very conventional figure. His contemporaries were shocked by His unconventionality. He was always doing and saying startling things. They never knew what He would say or do next. This was one of the root causes of the hatred of Him, which brought

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Him to His death. The charges recorded in the Gospels were trumped-up charges. The real charge against Him was that He insisted on shaking them out of the ruts along which they were comfortably jogging. He surprised, astonished and startled them. He made them wonder, and their wonder made them uncomfortable and afraid.

Read this chapter from which the text is taken. It does not matter whether the events are recorded in strict chronological order. In any case, the record affords striking examples of the Master's teaching. You cannot fail to note the breathless speed at which He hurries His disciples along. He makes them gasp as He overthrows old standards and sets up new ones. First of all, He is confronted with the problem of divorce. Moses, He tells them, made a concession to a comparatively low stage of moral development, but He Himself affirms the absolute law of the indissolubility of marriage. What blasphemy to speak of Moses thus ! But Jesus implies that human teachers, even though inspired, are subject to the limitations of their own time. It is not sacrilege to challenge the most sacred traditions in the name of the eternal truth of God. And it may be (indeed it is certain) that He is challenging some of our traditions and institutions to-day. If He came

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amongst us in the flesh, He would astonish us. If we could only hear what He is saying of some of our laws and customs we should be amazed.

The next picture on the screen is that of the little children who are brought to Him. He astonishes His hearers by telling them that a little child is the type of the true citizen of the Kingdom. Greece gloried in philosophy, Rome in military prowess, and Judaism is the accumulation of works of righteousness. But Jesus sets up a little child, with no learning or strength, and without time to have accumulated merit, as the type of the Kingdom. The great qualities, He says in effect, are innocence, wonder and joy. It is not strange that the disciples were amazed. That is a transvaluation of values which we have barely accepted even yet.

Then follows the incident of the rich young man. Most teachers would have eagerly welcomed him to their following. It is easy to excuse in the rich what we do not overlook in the poor. But Jesus sets up a hard test. "One thing thou lackest, go sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor," etc. And He said to His disciples: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!" "And the disciples were amazed at His words." Do these words astonish us? Do they send an uncom-

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fortable feeling through a congregation of rich men? Hardly, for they are not taken seriously, and most men apply them to everybody except themselves. Jesus elaborates further and says, "How hard it is for them *that trust in riches* to enter into the Kingdom of God." "And they were *astonished exceedingly*, saying, *Then, who can be saved?*" If the rich man, with all his opportunities of education, leisure, refinement, spaciousness of life, philanthropy, can with difficulty be saved, who can be saved? And Jesus replies, "With men it is impossible, but not with God."

Then Peter takes the stage. With a touch of self-complacency he says, "Lo, we have left all and have followed Thee." But then comes the crashing rejoinder. You "shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and lands, brethren and sisters and mothers, *with persecutions*; and in the world to come eternal life." "*With persecutions*"—that was the rub. He offered them a spiritual inheritance and with it a cross. Here again there is a complete transvaluation of values.

Surprise follows surprise. Long-cherished ideas are overthrown and destroyed one by one. The disciples are mazed and dazed.

If we could but recapture the picture of Jesus

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and place it in the frame of to-day, we should be astonished beyond measure. We, too often, present to the world a conventional, deadly dull, orthodox Jesus. But the real Jesus is full of sudden and startling surprises. He shocks our foolish prejudices, and challenges our self-complacent conservatism and hide-bound orthodoxy. He revolutionizes our theories, standards and ideas. He leaves us mazed and dazed, yet rejoicing in an inexpressible wonder and rapture, which impels us to follow Him whithersoever He goeth.

2. THE FEAR WHICH CHRIST ENGENDERS.

Someone has said, "If Christianity has never frightened us, we have never found out what it is."

We have toned down the Jesus of the Gospels. Too often He is presented as an emasculated, effeminate figure. We remember His pity, compassion and tenderness, but we forget His strength, anger and indignation. We remember His pitiful words, but forget His severe words. Read the Gospels and see how many times His hearers were made afraid by Christ. At the Transfiguration "they became sore afraid." When He spoke to them of His coming death, "they were afraid to ask Him." When He stilled the storm, "being afraid they marvelled."

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On another occasion we read, "they were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day." And again, "And fear took hold on all."

It was not that He was always speaking burning words of anger. There was something about His Personality which made them afraid. A great personality, however humble he may be, unconsciously makes us feel our littleness. He turns His clear, steady eyes upon us and we are afraid.

But there were some who never feared Him. Little children came to Him trustingly and He blest them. The poor and outcast, too, those who had never had a chance, those who had sinned and were ashamed of their sin and craved for comfort and healing—these saw nothing to be afraid of in Jesus, and they instinctively sought a refuge in Him.

But His enemies He filled with fear. He looked at them and they were afraid. They tried to show a bold front, to bully and bluster, but they could not stand His eyes, and they ended by slinking away. They were afraid of Jesus, and fear is the most cruel of all the passions. Men will do from fear what they will do from no other motive. Fear makes them treacherous, crafty, merciless and untruthful.

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It was because Jesus made His enemies afraid with a fear which they could only half analyse and understand, but which struck their conscience with an icy chill, that they hounded Him to His death.

The disciples, though He looked on them in love and they loved Him, were often afraid. He penetrated to their inmost motives and knew what they were thinking. James and John came to Him with a request couched in ambiguous terms. But they knew that He read their thoughts and they were compelled to blurt out, "Grant unto us that we may sit one on thy right hand and one on thy left hand in thy glory." He deals gently with them and says, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink?" They answer light-heartedly, "We are able." But they know not what they are saying. He answers, "The cup that I drink ye shall drink." They understand enough to know that He is making boundless demands on them, and they are humbled, chastened and afraid.

We can imagine the experience of Judas in these few weeks. He was plotting and scheming and cherishing dreams of avarice. But now and again he caught a glimpse of the eyes of the Master, and his soul must have

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shrivelled up within him. Jesus makes us feel that sin is a terrible thing. He does not do it by threatenings or by holding before us the terrors of Hell. You cannot read the Gospels without being struck by the comparative infrequency of Christ's appeal to the motive of fear of punishment in the hereafter. Rather does He make us afraid by what He is.

It is generally agreed that our age is deficient in the sense of sin. Some would have us revive the threatenings of Hell. But it is not in that way that we shall awaken the sense of sin in most men. Our dim sense of sin is due to our lack of fellowship with Christ. If we live in His fellowship we shall be afraid of sin. We shall feel in our inmost soul that it is a violation of love, that it is to ride rough-shod over the holiest laws of our being, and that it is to set up a barrier between us and our Eternal Father and Friend. "He makes me ashamed to live as I do, neglecting my soul," said one of the disciples of Socrates concerning his master. And the same is true, in an infinitely greater degree, of Jesus. He makes us ashamed and afraid to live as we do, neglecting our souls.

That is how Jesus makes us feel the terrible-ness of sin. He shows it to us as it is—as an outrage on holiness and love, as misplaced

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faith and trust, as disloyalty and disobedience to One who loves us, believes in us and has entrusted great things to us. As we realize these things we are afraid.

We have taken upon ourselves the name of Christ. Are you not sometimes frightened by what you have done? Are you not afraid of calling yourself a Christian, when you realize how high and holy and far-reaching are the demands of Christ, and how He trusts us and believes in us and entrusts to us all manner of commissions on which depend the welfare of His hosts and of His cause?

If you are afraid, be glad that you can still be frightened. Be glad that you are still able to marvel at the wonders of the Gospel. Be glad that Jesus Christ is not a lay figure in your religion, but is a living, loving Personality, who is able to make you afraid of outraging holiness and love. Be glad that you still fear the all-piercing and reproachful gaze of the tender, pitiful, loving eyes of Christ. Your fear will only be transitory. "Perfect love casteth out fear." You will hear the words which He spake to them of old :

" Fear not little flock."

" Lo, it is I, be not afraid."

JOY AND SACRIFICE

BY THE VERY REV. W. R. INGE, C.V.O., D.D.
Dean of St. Paul's

"Looking unto Jesus, the Captain and Perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
—Heb. xii. 2.

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“For the joy that was set before Him.” This verse stands alone in the New Testament. At first sight it seems to attribute self-regarding motives to the supreme act of pure self-sacrificing love. Surely, we may protest, our Blessed Lord was not thinking of Himself when He hung upon the Cross. He did not console Himself by thinking of His return to Heaven in triumph. He drank the bitter cup to the dregs in pure love for mankind, for us men and for our salvation. No vision of the coming glory was suffered to come between Him and the one perfect and sufficient sacrifice which He was offering. He bore it all, as if there were nothing to follow. Not for joy, but for love, did He endure the Cross, despising the shame.

Yes, that is true. But in the Epistle to the Hebrews, above all others, we need never be afraid that the note of heroism will be lowered. There is much more in this mention of “joy” than meets the eye. I will ask you to consider with me what the inspired writer meant when he

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speaks of joy as the motive of the Passion of Christ.

The great Indian poet and prophet, Tagore, whose writings are an inspiration to thousands in this country, speaks of joy—God's own joy—as the motive and cause of the creation of the world. Joy, he says, belongs inseparably to the act of creation. It is at once the motive of creation and the experience which accompanies every creative act. This seems to me profoundly true. Joy, for us, is the sense of active co-operation with the laws of God's world. It is, always, the glad feeling that we are, for the time at least, in harmony with the mind of God, that we are, in however small a degree, thinking God's thoughts after Him, and doing what He wishes to see being done. Joy is the spontaneous elevation of mind which rewards all good work. The poet feels joy when he has translated a beautiful idea into beautiful language; the artist feels joy when he has reproduced on canvas some lovely vision that floats before his mind's eye; the man of science when he has discovered some long-hidden secret of nature's laws; the craftsman when he contemplates a piece of skilful and honest work that he has turned out; and we all feel it when we have faithfully obeyed the voice of conscience and done

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an action with which we hope that God will be pleased. In every case, it is as creators of something that we feel joy. It is the satisfaction of the deepest need of our nature, that of doing or making something that is intrinsically right and good, which gives us joy.

And are we to suppose that the most glorious of all achievements, the redemption of mankind by the perfect Man, who alone could redeem it, gave no joy to its author? Must it not have been a joy transcending all other joys when our Redeemer felt that He could say to His Father, "I have finished the work that Thou gavest Me to do," or when at the moment of death He uttered the single triumphant word *τετέλεσται*, "It is finished"? The joy of the young mother "that a man is born into the world" must be a pale shadow of the joy which Christ felt at His "new creation" then safely delivered in pain and sorrow—the new dispensation, the new "order of love," the new covenant between God and man sealed with His blood.

Nothing is done perfectly till it is done with joy. Christianity does not agree with that morose philosophy which identifies God with law or duty. Not law and duty, but love and blessedness, are the ideals which move the Christian. In the free service which God

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requires of us there must be enough love to make the sacrifice joyous, enough joy to assure us that we are doing what we were meant to do. The joy of worthy achievement is not the motive of our striving, but it is its proper accompaniment and reward. Our Maker, in His kindness to us, has ordained that we cannot perform successfully any difficult task without a thrill of happiness which is far deeper than pleasure.

It is indeed very different from pleasure. If you look at the passage from which my text is taken, you will see that Christ is there spoken of as the example of perfect faith; He is the Beginner and the Perfecter of faith; and His perfect faith is shown in perfect endurance. The writer has before his eyes the picture of a long-distance foot-race. The heroes of old, of whom he has been speaking, have run their race, but they look to us, from the spectators' seats, to show the same endurance. Not without us can they be made perfect; their work is incomplete unless we carry it on. Therefore, he says, let us not disappoint them, but let us cast off the wraps in which we wait the signal to start, and let us run our race with enduring courage. For, see! There is Jesus, who ran the course before us, visible in glory at the goal. He endured to the end, for the joy that was set

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before Him—the joy of the deed, the joy of painful endurance, for the sake of a victory that was worth all the pain.

Such a joy is far indeed from what we call pleasure. But is it not the truth that every really creative act, every worthy achievement, brings us as much pain as pleasure? We hear many, pretty things said about the pleasure of work; but I doubt whether those who utter them have had much experience of what hard work means. In hard physical exertion the muscles are weary, the lungs pant, the heart labours. We know the condition of a group of runners coming in at the end of a mile race, of a crew of oarsmen at the end of a boat-race. And if our work is intellectual, what pleasure is there in feeling all our nerves on edge, with waves of irritation and depression surging through us? What pleasure is there in throbbing brows and broken nights? But no great work can be done without paying this price. No, let us get rid of cant. Nine-tenths of all work is drudgery, and if we want to bring any pure gold to God's temple, we must coin it out of our own heart's blood. And still the joy is there—joy that makes all worth while.

Let me remind you of a fine passage at the end of the novel *Romola*. "We can only

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have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts and much feeling for the rest of the world; and this sort of happiness often brings so much pain with it that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it is good."

Christian joy is not, as one of our hymns says, the pleasure that banishes pain. It is an experience of higher rank than pleasure; it includes pleasure, no doubt, but it can also take up and accept, and in so accepting it can transmute and overcome, pain. There is no lesson which needs to be emphasized more strongly than this. We are, or were till lately, losing our Christianity mainly because Christianity is a creed for heroes, and we were harmless, good-natured little people who wanted to have a good time. If the Cross were not a pretty ornament we should have discarded it long ago.

Perhaps the deepest lesson of the Passion is that the acceptance of pain enters into the experience of God Himself. Homer spoke of his gods as "they who lead an easy life"; we know that God does not lead an easy life. The harmony of the Divine life is a harmony which has overcome the harshest discords. The greater the work the greater the pain, and the greater

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the joy. If we can once get this truth firmly into our minds, that the perfect spiritual life is an experience in which pleasure and pain are both included, and taken up together into a higher realization, that which we call joy, it will alter our whole attitude towards the troubles of this world. There is no other way of understanding them; there is no other way of conquering them; and there is no other way of helping others to bear them. Hear the words which follow in this chapter. "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness. Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the palsied knees; and make straight paths for your feet, that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed."

For every true disciple, and much more for our Divine Captain Himself, the bitterest sorrow—that which is hardest to transmute into joy—is the sin and folly of mankind. This is indicated in the verse which follows my text, but it is unfortunately mistranslated in the Authorized Version. If you look at the Revised Version you will read, "Consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against

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themselves," not "against himself." The contradiction, the gainsaying of sinners against their own souls, was the bitterest grief that Christ had to endure. For He was their true Self; their true life was His own; they were made to reflect some hue of His Divine beauty, to imitate some fragment of His Divine goodness. He was their true self; He is our true self; and He suffers, is crucified, and put to shame, when men and women are false to themselves, and turn the light that is in them to darkness.

This is a thought to touch the conscience of the most hardened sinner. It is also a strengthening thought when we are tempted to be "weary and faint in our minds" at the desperate wickedness and folly which we see going on around us. The Cross of Christ can bear even that burden. Sin is sin, and for ever hateful; the wicked, when they die, will go to their own place, like Judas; but for those that love God, all things, even the crimes of the wicked, will work together for good; and those who have run their race with patience, sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, looking unto Jesus, the Captain and Perfecter of faith, will enter into the joy of their Lord, in whose presence is the fullness of joy. "These things have I spoken unto you (our Lord said), that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

THE ATONEMENT

BY THE VERY REV. W. FOXLEY NORRIS, D.D.
Dean of Westminster

"We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto them which are called . . . the power of God."—I Cor. i. 23, 24.

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LENT brings us once more face to face with the Cross. For what does the Cross mean? It means that sin is a terribly real thing; that sin deserves punishment; that punishment is inevitable and essential. That is what the Cross means.

But "we preach Christ crucified," and that is more than the Cross. It is Christ upon the Cross. And what does that mean? It means that all the sin of the world gathered up and concentrated on one Person has been borne once for all on our behalf. He suffered on our behalf, not instead of us. "He bore our sins" in this sense, "in His own Body on the Tree." He who was Himself without sin "was made sin for us" that we might be freed from sin. "He died that we might be forgiven."

(1) Now all this, about sin and punishment, is not popular to-day. People do not like to dwell upon it. To the "Jews" it is a stumbling block, as it was at first. Religious people would rather dwell on the joyous side of their religion. Sacrifice and discipline, and all the things that

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belong to the sterner side of religion are a stumbling block. Easter—yes; Lent—no! A Messiah—yes; a crucified Saviour—no! So it was to the Jews, so it is now, so it probably will always be—except to them that are called.

And to the Greeks it is foolishness. To those who approach religion from the intellectual point of view without faith, what good can the death of one man do to others? And surely there is enough suffering in the world without manufacturing more!

(2) But, nevertheless, it is “the wisdom of God.” The sense of sin is a real thing, and has to be dealt with.

There is an interesting passage in one of F. D. Maurice’s books in which he enlarges upon the universality of the consciousness of sin in every individual soul. In every age men try to belittle sin. Some will boldly assert that there is no such thing as sin: that there never was what we call “the Fall”: others that what we call sin is merely the failure of a man to attain the highest, or that it is at worst imperfection: others again that it is all misfortune, that we are as we are born or as our surroundings make us, and that we are not personally responsible. But it won’t do. It is all of no avail. Each one of us knows in his inmost consciousness that

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ne has sinned and that there is no chance of peace or happiness here or hereafter without real effective forgiveness. And then come two hopeless feelings. First that nothing we can now do can possibly atone for the wrong we have done : that we cannot win forgiveness for ourselves. In short, we know that the words are true that when we have done all that is required of us we are still "unprofitable servants." That first : and secondly, that whatever the blessings of this life may be and whatever the joy of some future remote Heaven may be, yet these blessings and this joy are not for us unless, somehow, we can be cleansed, forgiven, absolved. A child with a guilty conscience does not really enjoy his birthday party : riches are nothing to a rich man if his mind is not at ease. People may call it what they like, but there is an innate longing in the human soul for an atonement, and an inevitable consciousness that there can be no rest or happiness without it. St. Paul's description of his own state of mind is universally true : " Oh, wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death ! "

And it is a remarkable thing that Christianity is the one and only religion that offers an atonement, and meets therefore the real need of man.

(3) But an atonement must commend itself

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as real and fair—a fiction will not do. Vicarious punishment will not satisfy. I cannot in my heart believe that I can be forgiven through the sufferings of another man punished in my stead. Atonement involves suffering, but it must be *my* suffering. Atonement involves punishment, but it must be punishment of *me*.

During the South African War a company of Bechuana troops was marching past a village where a missionary had put up outside the little church a roughly fashioned crucifix. It was the work of a born artist and told its tale. As the men marched by a lad who was a Christian suddenly broke from the ranks, and stretching out his arms towards the crucifix cried out, "*Come down, Jesus, from that Cross. That is my place, not yours.*" That was a true instinct. Very likely he had never seen a crucifix before, but he knew what it meant. He had the root of the matter in him. "That is my place, not yours," expresses our side of the doctrine of the Atonement.

(4) Now in answer to all this we preach "Christ crucified . . . the power of God." On the hill of Calvary my Saviour hung upon the Cross, suffering the supreme punishment for sin. "Thus it must be." There could be no salvation without it. He knew that it must be so.

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Let us recall and sum up our belief. "He hung and suffered there" for me : that is, on my behalf : that through His death I might be saved from death.

And here comes in our faith. We are justified by faith—not by imputed righteousness, but by claiming with the help of God's grace and taking our share in the death of the second Adam by faith in Him. This is where our personal effort comes in. We accept Him as the Saviour of mankind. By faith we take our sins and realise that they are included in what He bore because we have been made members of Him. But this implies that we are dead to sin. The test of our faith lies in our present refusal to sin. "Go and sin no more." To lie at the foot of the Cross for an hour and to "feel" forgiven, and to go out and indulge ourselves again—this is a mockery . . . the kind of cant that sickens the world. No, we leave the Cross to begin the stern fight, and the difference in us is that we find that now we can conquer, because we have the "Power of God." "To the Jews a stumbling block, to the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called . . . Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

The Atonement is a great mystery, but it is also a blessed and practical truth. Without it

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we are without hope in the world. But we are not without it : " as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." " He died that we might be forgiven."

And the Atonement is the final expression of God's Love. The ultimate inducement against sin is the realization of that love. " The love of Christ constraineth us."

Against the old nursery idea which so many of us imbibed as children from well-meaning, ignorant women—that somewhere, always watching us, was an awful, angry Being, who would " visit our offences with the rod," there has been in these modern days a recoil, which is inducing a great many people to go to the other extreme and present to us an amiable God, who will overlook our imperfections. That is equally untrue. The truth is quite unlike either of these imaginings. It is simply that " God is love," and that " He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

A child who loves his father and knows that his father loves him tries to do what his father wishes and not to do things that displease him—not because he thinks his father is waiting to punish him, but just simply because he has learned by experience that it hurts and grieves his father to see disobedience, disloyalty, ingratitude.

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As with the child and his father so with myself and my God. Here is the real guilt of sin and the real incentive to fight against it.

The sting of sin is that it hurts that great Love which is beyond our comprehension in its fullness. There will be no real fight against sin till we appreciate that. Let the appeal of that Love sink into our hearts to-day and draw us up to God.

GRACE

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"The Grace of God."—I Cor. i. 4.

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IN the word "Grace," I think, we have an instance of the proverbial truth that "familiarity breeds contempt." It has become such a stock word of religion that we hear and use it without pausing to think what it means. I had the curiosity to look it up in the Concordance; and I find that it occurs, in the New Testament, more than ninety times. No doubt that is why, in our language, it has become—in a sense—naturalized out of its meaning. Somehow it has come to sound tame, and vague, and dreamy; at best, indefinitely gentle and soothing and sweet.

But I do assure you that it means something tremendously awful and powerful; something the world depends on for its safety every moment; something you and I cannot afford to do without, if our eternal future is to be anything worthy of the call and election of God in Christ. I think it may be worth while for us to spend a few minutes in trying to find out what this word really does mean. There are a good many words commonly used in the parlance of religion, which have this kind of narcotic effect upon us.

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We are excellent hypnotic subjects, where eternal things are concerned. As God said to Ezekiel: "Thou art unto them a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." And in this word "Grace" there seems to be the very spirit of lullaby.

Well, words are like people. If you want to come at any real knowledge about them, you look up their ancestry. Let us make some enquiry into the pedigree of this word, "Grace." The Greek word for it, "Charis," is a very old word indeed. At first it seems to have meant just "beauty," in persons first, and secondarily in things; a "grace," as we say, of form or manner, which gave the beholder pleasure. Then it came to mean a beautiful act, showing beauty of character, loveliness of heart. And as the loveliest thing we can do is to give, the act of Grace took on a "gratuitous" sense, meaning generally some kindness undeserved, or done for nothing; as to this day we talk about "doing me a favour," which is really the same word.

Now many of the distinctively Christian words, used by our Lord and His Apostles, were just old words which came into the New Testament from the Septuagint; a Greek translation of the Old Testament, made at Alexandria about 284 B.C. These were old classical Greek

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words—such as Love, Hope, Faith—into which our Lord in His wonderful way breathed new and beautiful meanings without changing or misusing them; as He always beautifies and turns to gold everything He touches, blessed be His Name.

In the Septuagint, then, we find this word *Charis* used for the most part in that old primary sense, beauty of form or manner, or sometimes of conduct or demeanour. It is not till we arrive at the Proverbs and the Prophets that there creeps into it the idea of favour on God's part to man. And in its last occurrence, in Zechariah, we find for the first time the dawn of the Christian meaning; "I will pour upon the House of David the spirit of Grace, and they shall look on Me whom they have pierced."

But in the New Testament we get the full brightness of the Gospel meaning shining out of the word; and it takes its place at last as a jewel in the golden treasury of Christian language, which has ever since enriched the world. It is the gem shining in Mary's hair when she first appears before us, "Ave Maria, Gratia plena." It ushers in the Birth of God—"And we beheld His Glory, full of Grace and truth."

Grace, beloved, on a Christian's lips, whether he know it or not, means this : "beautiful gratuitous Favour," given to the world of men by

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God, through the only means by which He ever deals with the world, Jesus Christ—the Incarnate Word of the Father. It is called Grace, because it is the full and final expression of all the infinite Beauty of God's Character, in that it bestows upon creatures, who deserved destruction, the ineffable privilege of union with God.

And moreover it is "gratuitous," because it does this at the price of God's own Life. For, to make it possible, He stepped down into our strait and misery, and identified Himself with our creature-nature, and underwent our due penalty that we might, without deserving, identify ourselves with His meritorious Purity and so qualify for a share in His Glory.

And so Grace is no vague subjectivity. It is the most dynamic and beautiful thing that is to be had in this world. The most beautiful, because its sire is Love and its mother is Sacrifice. The most powerful, because it confers upon defiled and moribund man the power and the right to share, yes, and even to deserve—and that is more wonderful still—the Glory of God.

Grace is the medicine of character, and the food of the soul. It is omnipotent, like its Giver. It can turn a churl into a gentleman, and a fool into a sage. There is no case too hopeless for it. I am not giving you pulpit cant; I know

what I am speaking about, for I have seen the working of Grace on many souls; and when I see a thing, I know that I see it. A priest is not a mere official of the State paid to read prayers. He is, under God, through the Sacrament of Penance, a physician of souls; and if in the course of this business, with God's help, he gains no experience of life and knowledge of character, he is not worthy of his name and calling.

You who complain that your temper is hopeless, that your pride is too deep of root for you ever to conquer it; that you are sure you can never get over your jealousy, or subdue your lust! Either you are in bad faith, which in Christ's regard puts you out of court; or you are in the wrong path, the path of effort instead of the path of dependence—and that, until you turn and retrace your steps, is hopeless. Let me say at once and frankly: human evil, by human effort, is unconquerable. You may have a will like toughened steel; original sin—the power of it, that is—will get the better of you. But Grace will do it. It may take a lifetime, and the campaign may not be finished when you come to die. The stump of the cancer may have to be cauterised by experience after death. But Grace will do it. What is the reason?

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This. All human work upon character is by its nature negative; but the work of Grace is positive. Excision is excellent; without creation it is useless. Self-repression, self-restraint, good and needful things in their way and place, in themselves aim only at the removal of the evil thing. They may succeed; in which case you will probably cut out more than you want. Every sin is a bad growth which has fastened upon some natural function or quality, good and harmless in itself. Slashing away at the sin may be an excellent thing; but you have got to consider whether you wish to cut out a part of the organ it grows upon.

It is better to enter into life maimed—we know the rest. But it is best of all to enter—yourself, perfected and sanctified. The ideal of salvation is not to be a *tabula rasa*, a house empty and swept, a soul qualified for salvation at the expense of every function and faculty that makes for individuality and personal distinctiveness in a man. Even so, one would be the gainer, no doubt. But surely our Lord's idea is that you should get all your faculties, all your aptitudes and passions, purged and sublimated into virtues. God wants them all in the economy of His Kingdom, I am sure. And so we do not want to kill them, but to purify them and adapt them to service.

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Now self-discipline, alone, cannot do this. But Grace can, and does, do it. For Grace works, not negatively, but positively. Grace does not aim only at the excision of the bad thing. It puts in the good thing, which grows and grows until there is no room left for the bad thing, so that at last it is pushed out. Salvation is not a negation. It is not merely being free from sin; it is being full of Light. It is not like the call of the mother to the little girl in the street, "Go and see what Tommy is doing, and tell him he mustn't." Into the swept and garnished soul came seven other demons, worse than the first; for it was not furnished.

It is sin that is the negation of virtue; virtue is the positive thing. If I am proud, I do not want merely to get rid of my pride; I want to get Humility. If I am unchaste, I do not want just to stop being so; I want to get Purity; which is not the negation of the sexual passion, but the consecration and sublimation of it.

And Grace puts in these things; because it puts in Jesus Christ; and the good thing gradually chokes the bad thing and crowds it out. I know no better theology than is contained in that line of the simple hymn, "And our sins shall drop off in His tender embrace." That is Salvation. And this is the mistake made by so

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many good religious people; they wonder why they make no progress; it is because they have been going on chopping away at the sin, whereas they ought to have been praying for, and practising, the virtue.

You see, if I am to give up my sins, I have a sort of right to demand something that will compensate me for them. Sin is pleasant, is it not? It is all around me, it is easy and exciting, there is every inducement to it. It is not likely that I am going to give up doing what really brings me pleasure for the time, unless I am offered something beautiful which will make it worth my while to turn to it instead. It is all very well promising me eternal life after death; I want something on account, some earnest or instalment which I can hold by now, and by which I can assure myself that religion is real and beautiful—and so climb up by degrees.

Well, Grace gives you this. It educates; it instructs; it informs; it upbuilds. In a word, it creates. It slowly spreads through the system of your soul and tinges it with a new quality, a new relation to all the world of things; so that by imperceptible degrees you grow conscious of an altered sense of values; a better taste comes, a more sublimed ideal, a sense that the knowledge of being clean and true and good—even with

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all the cost to animal self-love—is better than the old corruption and more worth having.

And so, slowly—yes, but surely—you come to look back with real distaste on the old ideals and standards of life and conduct, and when temptation comes (for be sure the powers of evil will not easily surrender you) though your first thought may be “How pleasant it would be to yield!” your second is this: “No—I don’t really want it. It isn’t good enough.” This plane of development, if you can rise into it, is Salvation in process and in being.

Do not imagine for a moment that this work of Grace upon the soul involves depletion of character, or loss of individuality. On the contrary, its sure end and aim is the development of Personality in its true perfection. Only by its means can man, as a Person, ever come to his true focus. A Christian’s Ideal Self lies potentially reserved for him in the New Humanity, which is the Christ. “We have a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.” “We are being kept by the power of God through faith unto a Salvation ready to be revealed”; “begotten again to an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for us.” We are “growing up into Him in all things, which is the Head.”

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This "growing up" like a plant into the Christ-Perfection; this building up, like a pyramid to its apex; it is the slow attainment, here, of the true and proper Self—the ideal Person of every man and woman, as God sees them; the perfect Image which still sleeps in me, as the pure golden circlet in the drossy ore, the gracious angel in the quarried block of marble. Much smelting in the painful furnace, "many a blow and biting sculpture" may be needed, before the lovely thing can be revealed. But the creative action of the goldsmith and the sculptor, the living genius passing from the Artist and materializing in the lines of form and beauty; this is Grace: and by its work upon our yet infra-human roughness and deformity, we "come to ourselves"—and are, in very truth, "made man."

And then, Grace does another wonderful thing. Even suppose, by any means, your own efforts could make you good. Then, at the best, you would be unworthy and incapable of that union with God which is your destiny. Unqualified by any part or share in the God-Man who is the only Medium between flesh and Deity, the objective taint of fallen and unatoned humanity would still exclude you from all vital relation with the unapproachable Purity of God. No degree of natural virtue can lift man into

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contact with the footpace of God's Throne ; much less into the heaven of His Heart.

But even this miracle is possible to Grace. For it does not merely concede, or pronounce, man worthy of union with God. It makes him so. There is no putative compromise about it; it is qualification pure and simple. It does not merely impute to man, but actually imparts to him, the Merit by which his Pioneer has opened the way to God. So that, when man—the process of his redemption perfected—attains his eternal destiny, he enters on his rights. For He passes into Christ's Kingdom as part of Christ. The deserts and merits of that Body, whose organic member he is, have passed into him and become his own.

You, who have been trying and trying to be "good"—and after all, that is the Ideal in one simple word—by the efforts of your own unaided will, and have so blankly failed; or you, who have been using Grace fitfully or faithlessly and cannot conquer self and lust and pride : begin and try again, but in a new and different way. Stop paltering this time, and surrender yourself. Go to the means of Grace, to your Confessions and Communion, with a firm and dogged resolve that you will tighten your nerveless fingers and really take hold of the Hand held out to you from heaven.

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For remember, there is no question of "putting the Sacraments in the place of Christ." That foolish and terrible conception is the fallacy of sloth-bound ignorance. The Sacraments *are* Christ. In them the Christ-life organically passes into our soul-substance and builds up its growth, as the blood passes from the heart to permeate and vitalize the members, as the sap rises from root and stem into the branches and leaves of a tree.

Cease playing at religion as a cult or hobby, and throw into it your heart and soul. Mean it, live it, make it yours. And after you have received the Grace of God, do not be like the man who beheld his natural face in a glass and went away and straightway forgot what manner of man he was. Remember, realize, and respond to the power that has been planted within you; be receptive, sensitive, expectant; and when temptation comes, claim boldly the interior, hearted Life. You will feel a vigour springing up in your spiritual nerves, a dynamic current flowing out into your feeble will; appropriate it ere it sink back inoperative, wield its holy energy, strike your blow in the name of Christ and freedom. And, even should you be worsted, do not lie sullenly calling God to witness that your cause is hopeless—which is really telling Him that His

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Grace is unavailing—but resort again to the cleansing Blood, the empowering Food, and “live to fight another day.”

We sing these spirited and heroic hymns, “Fight the good fight with all thy might, Christ is thy Strength, and Christ thy Right”—and when He accords us the honourable assay of Temptation, we do not even call upon Him, but go down like a stone; and then we complain to our clergyman that the Sacraments do not help us. What do shield and sword avail, if we are too idle to wield them? “I am so weak,” you say. Then, all the better; so much the easier to be humble—which is half the battle. If indeed you are weak, you should be easily led; then let Christ lead you, Christ whose help awaits your lightest cry, and, when it comes, is always just enough; Christ who said, “My Grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

We have entered on the holy Season of Lent. The name comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word, *lencten*, which means spring; I suppose because Lent is in the spring of the year. But there is a deeper fitness in the name, and a mystical. For Lent is, or should be, the time of the new life of the soul; the yearly Spring in which she so renews her dispositions that the

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Life of God creeps up with new vigour into her veins, and she puts forth fresh shoots of holiness.

But this spiritual Spring differs from the ordinary spring of nature in that there is, or should be, a greater luxuriance, every year, of leaf and flower and fruit. Making full allowance for that backsliding which, alas, is inseparable from our earthly efforts towards God, the record of the Book of Life ought to find us, Lent over, nearer to God than we were a year ago. I do not mean definitely that every Easter should acclaim some specific sin conquered, some particular grace acquired; though God grant it may be so. I mean that every Lent, year by year, ought to achieve something towards raising the whole tone and quality of the soul.

Now you know as well as I do what is the chief cause that hinders this ideal. You know it is Sloth; the subtlest and deadliest enemy of the Christian; the ugly, negative thing that scarcely seems a sin, whereas it comes to us with all the sins in the universe hidden in its knapsack. Sloth is the last and most insidious of all the Capital Sins, because it deters and separates us from the only remedy for sin—the use of Grace.

It is commonly said that Satan tempts us to sin; but he has a labour-saving device more effective than a hundred sins; he tempts us to

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Sloth. All the sins in the world cannot hurt or hinder us when once God's Grace has cancelled them; the tactic of the enemy is therefore directed against Grace. If he can succeed in deterring us from Grace, he has us fairly. He can then turn to higher game, and leave us to tempt ourselves; for if we neglect Grace we are ruined. And the sin by which he inoculates us against Grace, and so lays us at the mercy of all the poisons flesh is heir to, is Sloth.

Now there is only one effectual antidote of Sloth; and that is Love. No other power can touch or stir it. The laziest person in the world will rouse himself to action for the sake or favour of one he truly loves. Seeing then that the love of Christ is itself a Grace, or gift given by Him; and that this love is the only force which can galvanize the self-loving sluggish soul into the active practice of "the means of grace, and the hope of glory": I beseech you to implore the Holy Spirit for the gift of Love, that the animal inertia, which makes men and women careless of the call of the Physician, may be counteracted by the enchanting vision of His Beauty.

Thus alone shall you be secured against that most frequent menace to the blessing of this holy time; a falling-off from Communion, from Eucharistic worship, and from prayer, towards

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the middle of Lent. It is the rock upon which Catholic Christians make shipwreck most of all. My experience is that Ash Wednesday is most generally a day of promise and resolution, of burdens laid at the foot of the Cross, of renewed and sincere self-hallowing in the Name that saves us. It is about Lætare Sunday, when he ought to be rejoicing in his "children walking in truth," that the priest begins to be a little sad and anxious.

"In Holy Week," subconsciously we tell ourselves, "I will make good." So we pledge our days, before they dawn; and draw, without security, our overdraft on God's long-suffering: an ironic parody of faith! Life is fleeting by, and neither length of days, nor the lease of his own "accepted time," are things foregone—to him that loves and fears.

Sustained spiritual effort, constancy to vision, and to purpose framed in vision's light: these are the Christian's crying need to-day. Form your Rule, and find your pride in its observance. That is the cant of sloth and coldness, which pretends to belittle the outward forms and practices of religion, as though they were in some sense alternative to the interior allegiance of the heart. It is easy for self-pleasers to find fault with formalism; I am for the good formalist;

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he gives proof at least of will and conscience, and I think there is much hope of him; he is trying to please his Lord, and to entrench himself against the easy laxity of a sensual age, which finds a fine excuse in big talking about "the heart."

You will take heed that no man deceive you. You will sustain your Communions, your efforts at grace-given self-control, your Church-going, your Meditations, and your prayers. You will be ambitious that Holy Week and Easter shall not find you scrambling to "make good" lost ground—for none but God can "make good," or make you good; but advanced a little closer to the Standard of Calvary, grown somewhat higher in the stature that is Jesus, a little nearer to His Heart. For the soul of salvation is reliance upon grace; and Final Perseverance is the high road to the Crown.

POISE AND BALANCE

BY THE REV. CANON T. GUY ROGERS, M.C., B.D.
Rector of Birmingham, Chaplain to the King

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."—Isaiah xl. 31.

Poise and Balance

ONE of the earliest problems to which we are introduced by the educative process of Nature is the problem of keeping our balance. The early efforts of the child to walk across the room without falling on his face are symbolic of his future career. He is always wrestling with this problem of poise. To mastery over his own limbs succeeds mastery over his machine. Most of us have forgotten the ecstasy of our first experience, after many bruises, of preserving intact our balance on a bicycle, but the experience of the perfect swing of the golf club, even if rare, is not so remote. Wherever man betakes himself—to the sea or to the air, whatever weapon or tool he fashions for his use—he can neither enter his kingdom nor fulfil his desire without the mastery of balance.

It is the same in the region of character. What early struggles we have had to learn that we cannot always have the thing we want at the moment when we want it. Childhood, far from being gentle and persuasive, is really raw and violent. Sweet reasonableness is still

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far ahead and the problem of balance lies between. To take and to hold, to grasp and to keep, is the child's first instinct, and the disciplining of self-love is the work of years, often weary years, of buffeting and defeat. The trouble is that so many of us, in spite of all the educative process, insist on growing up a prey to gusty passions and to the tyranny of an unbalanced egotism. Hence come lust and hate, jealousy and despotism and all else that destroys fellowship amongst men.

It is the same, too, in what I might define roughly as the region of good taste and culture. It is the lack of balance that produces the snob, the crank and the pedant. It was said of Francis of Assisi that he always lived his life in the presence of his Superior. His adoring attitude to Jesus robbed him of every vestige of pride. He knew his place and kept it to the end—that of the Bedesman of Christ. There was no spiritual danger to him in associating with his inferiors; his Superior was much more real to him. That kept the balance true. Snobbery arises from “one-sided” comparison. It withers in the presence of the Great Superior of us all.

The whole purpose of culture is to take away from us this one-sidedness. Perhaps the only

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way we can be sure that we are getting the genuine thing, and not some horrible imitation of it, is when we become conscious of spiritual poise in ourselves. The universe, as we know, is full of it. "Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge?" exclaims one of the speakers in the Book of Job. Yes, we do—and we know, too, the perfect poise of a single daffodil nodding on its stem, or a host of them "tossing and dancing in the breeze." We have added vastly to our knowledge of poise in the universe since the ancients began their study of God's ways. But it is only when we become conscious of it in ourselves that the educative process, to which we have so long submitted, begins to bear its perfect fruit. It is a happy moment when there begins to emerge in the course of discarding prejudices and assimilating ideas some guiding principle which gives us a sense of spiritual well-being. It is a happy experience when we begin to co-ordinate humour with seriousness, imagination with purpose, and love with business. To escape from sentimentalism and cynicism is the beginning of wisdom. To possess an organized self no longer at the mercy of crude thinking or untutored feeling is to be far advanced in wisdom's way. To relate the organized self

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to the highest end and the greatest good is to achieve the very goal and end of life. This is nothing else than the perfect mastery of poise.

I am concerned with setting out that this idea of poise is one proper to the Christian view of life. There is an idea that the Christian is a left-handed man in a world adapted to right-handed men. Granted the value of fanaticism, he may be a useful fanatic. Granted that an Anti-Something Society is needed, he will be a valuable President. Granted that self-denial is called for, he is the man from whom it may be expected. But a robust, interesting, many-sided life is not what we ordinarily associate with Christianity, and therein lies the misconception which I would seek to remove.

Take, for example, the most highly specialized form of Christian life as it appears to the outsider—the life of a clergyman. The idea that it is necessarily a narrow one is pure delusion. He can practise his profession in relation to any class of persons in any part of the world. He can find his adventures in the mission-field, or in the heart of a great industrial parish if he feels cramped in vegetable surroundings. The World Call provides him with no lack of geographical scope. But his scale of values will more naturally be qualitative rather than quantitative, and the

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fact that his profession is intimately concerned with Goodness, Truth and Beauty redeems it for ever from the charge of narrowness. Its direct relation to helping people in the moral struggle does not in the least disturb its claim to balance or proportion. For what is the moral struggle? It is the effort to achieve real 'goodness—a perfectly balanced character.

But I am concerned with the ordinary Christian who has an uncomfortable feeling that if he is to be a devoted follower of Christ he must close his eyes to things which other people see, and warp his judgment in obedience to his faith. I want him to see that it is the Christian who is trying to take notice of all the facts and to make the fuller synthesis.

Let me take an example from our Lord's teaching which will illustrate this. He sums up for us the Christian view of life: "'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'" Notice that here is no condemnation of self-love, but it is set forth in its right relationship to love of God and love of our neighbour. The basis of self-love which is essential to the preservation of the race is frankly admitted. Our Lord says quite plainly, "'Thou shalt love thyself.'" But He

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says equally plainly, "Thou shalt love God first and thou shalt love thy neighbour *as* thyself. Here is a perfect example of what I mean by poise and balance. It is right and fitting that a man should care for his body and his home, his family and his friends. Self-interest cannot be eradicated. Much that is healthy and beautiful in human life depends upon it, but if the principle is pursued in isolation it may have disastrous results. That is the way in which greedy, lustful, avaricious and snobbish people are produced. It is essential that the principle should be related to the loyalty which we owe to God, and to the welfare of the whole community. That is the meaning of the primary emphasis on love to God, and the command to regulate the excesses of self-love by the claims of the human beings amongst whom we live.

The same point might be made with regard to our Lord's revelation of Himself as the Way. He offers to rescue life from fruitless wanderings, to provide it with a sense of direction, and to create for it a goal. He meets us at the moment when we are tempted to dissipate our energies in the pursuit of some will-of-the-wisp created by our imagination or the reactions of our emotional life. He recalls us from the marsh or the bog, and sets our feet on solid ground.

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There is a fine passage which illustrates this doctrine of the balanced way in a book now but little read, which goes very deep into the heart of religion—Hort's Hulsean Lectures in 1871 on Christ as The Way, The Truth and The Life. Speaking of the early years of young manhood, he writes :

" We stand in the interval of freedom between the personal subjection of childhood, and the fateful bondage of middle life. . . . The leading-strings have been severed. A wide and various world lies before us with a seeming power in ourselves to turn whithersoever we will. At such a time the new sense of liberty well-nigh revolts at the idea of a Way. The delightfulness of the opening world depends in no small measure on its semblance of Waylessness. To stray deviously at will over hill and dale, sipping of every fountain, is the almost acknowledged ideal to which we rejoice to be able to approximate.

" But in due time we find the choice given to us is not between wandering and journeying, but between journeying this way or journeying that. This is the true meaning and purpose of our temporary freedom which is no delusion but a happy reality. What we have to choose in the days of choice is nothing less than the character of the bond which is to make our actions coherent. To everyone whose thoughts of life are not wholly unworthy it is evident that some ways are hateful and that others are noble. But on the actual

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surface of things the forms of nobleness and hatefulness are easily lost to view in the mixed or neutral mass. Here Christ meets us with His inexhaustible answer: "I am the Way." And the answer, if it gives food for lifelong meditation, gives also sufficient light for immediate action. Much remains dark to us; but the purposes of life receive a clear and powerful direction the moment we believe the one supreme Way of Life is Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Lord."

This last illustration will help to make plain the dynamic character of the Christian doctrine of balance. It consists not only of poise, but also of momentum. Properly understood, poise includes momentum. The most perfect interpretation of what the word stands for is to be found in Victor Hugo's picture of the bird poised for flight.

✓ "Be like a bird which for a moment may
Rest on frail bough, yet all untroubled sings.
Nor checks its song to heed the bending spray,
Calm in the quiet consciousness of wings."

The Christian doctrine is no dull standing pat, nor is it any *via media* of safety unrelated to the goal of ultimate truth. It is nothing less than the organization of the whole self in pursuit of the whole end of life. It is as far removed from pose or speculative dilettantism as the life of Jesus was from that of Beau Nash. It is the

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recognition that there are two worlds, not one, to which we belong—the world of spirit as well as matter; that there are always two persons, not one, to be considered, yourself and your neighbour; that there are always two forces, not one, at work in the world—both goodness and evil. But it is an instantaneous recognition that may be compared to the poise of an eagle before its flight. To spiritual discernment succeeds moral action. The whole personality moves courageously forward in obedience to the vision. It is not content with saying this is the right thing to do, but does it. It is not content with definition, but proceeds to practice. It throws its whole weight upon the side of goodness. It fights with its whole strength against evil. It moves, always preserving its spiritual poise, but sometimes “terrible as an army with banners”—gathering momentum on its way.

The two keywords of the Christian life are poise and momentum. They represent the qualities which give uniqueness to the life of Jesus. We speak of His spiritual insight, His unfaltering faith, His sure touch upon human life, the naturalness and spontaneity of His relationships with men and women, His quickness in emergency, the underlying unity of His life. All this may be summed up by affirming His

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spiritual poise. The one incident recorded of His childhood suggests His possession of it from the start. He recognized even while learning His trade as a carpenter that He must be about His Father's business. The severe experience of temptation, at the beginning of His ministry, left Him poised upon a higher plane, master of Himself, conscious of His mission and deliberately shaping His life towards its achievement. He had mounted up with eagle's wings, and, consequently, He could run and not be weary, He could walk and not faint. We can see Him reaching a higher poise as the end draws near. The story of the Transfiguration seems to suggest something of the kind. The decease which He is about to accomplish at Jerusalem is visualized. Calvary and the Cross are seen not only in their naked human horror, but in the whitelight of eternity. Once again He mounts up with eagle's wings, and, consequently, He can climb even up Calvary's hill and endure the Cross without fainting. He achieves poise and momentum follows. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished. The cup which My Father hath given Me to drink, shall I not drink it? Father, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

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These same keywords explain the triumphant rise of the Christian Church. The early disciples, poised upon the Resurrection, looked out upon the world with a joyousness which amazed Greeks and Barbarians alike. The courage, the audacity, the certainty—the unique bond of fellowship which united them, took the world by storm. In a society restless and feverish, hag-ridden by superstition or cynically sceptical, the appearance of the Christian radiant with life in Christ marked a new epoch. His poise was altogether different from that of the stoic. It was joyous and spontaneous. The life it produced was an uncalculated expression of inner peace and joy, an untrammelled manifestation of practical goodwill. It had something of the exaltation of the eagle's flight and the directness of the eagle's swoop. There was in it no trace of artificiality, of a pose maintained by assiduous discipline. It was a life, made free by the Cross and raised to power by the Resurrection, which gathered momentum on its way.

The Church needs to recover this Christian doctrine of balance if it is to run without weariness and to walk without faintness. There is danger of arrested progress. It is easy for life to be strangled by organization or for enthusiasm to be killed by compromise. It is quite possible

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for the Church to become thoroughly representative of the vested interests of the day. The things which are seen may weigh more with us than the things which are not seen. The temporal may mean more to us than the eternal. The highly industrialized West with its inordinate pursuit of material efficiency threatens at every point the life of the Spirit. We need to recover consciousness of Jesus who has ascended above all things for the one purpose "that He may fill all things." We can re-establish our poise by contact with Him who is still the Way, the Truth, the Life. Thus only can we hope to survive the perils of modern industrialism. When we see life through His eyes, when we live with His sense of values, when, in other words, we seek the Kingdom and His righteousness, we make our own social salvation possible. To recover our faith in the living Jesus, not only as the dominant Figure in past history, but as the most immediately effective Personality in human life to-day, is the great need of the Church. That is the only thing that can save us from the disintegrating effects of our particular "ism"—hedonism, ecclesiasticism, industrialism or nationalism. Contact with the living Jesus will release the springs of power and kindle anew the zeal of love which carried

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the Church of the first century so joyously on its way.

It is to Jesus, too, that the individual must go if he is to secure the poise that will enable him to sustain life joyously and courageously on the highest level. I do not deny that life may be organized on lower levels than that of Jesus, and that a satisfactory life, as far as the individual is concerned, may be achieved in relation to the lower end in view. But if it is to be a choice of the highest and the best, of courage matched with gentleness, discipline with freedom, service with enjoyment—if it is to be a life where self-love is transmuted into a glorious life of fellowship with God and man, it is to Jesus he must go. There are many ways to lower ends, but only one way to the highest. That is why Jesus is the Way. He it is who leads us out of our native selfishness into the world of loving relationships, enriching our lives through each new circle into which He draws us. The deepest and most satisfying experience—the biggest circle of all—is fellowship with the Father.

It is a real Gospel for those who are conscious of divided and distracted personalities—that poise may be found in Jesus. Careers and, what is perhaps more serious, homes have often been wrecked by violent temper. Vacilla-

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tion and cowardice have deprived good people of their self-respect. For many, through bad manners or bad habits, life is something of a misfit. Moral confidence is shaken, the soul sags heavily, life comes to a standstill. Salvation for such people consists not merely in confession of failure, or assurance of forgiveness, but in recovery of poise. In Jesus it is possible to see life sanely and to see it whole. In Him the things that are worth while stand out from the things that do not matter, and once the difference is perceived the cause of a thousand petty irritations dies away. In Him appears the unifying principle of love which interprets life as service and chastens the purely personal ambition. Contact with Him produces an infectious courage which expels the spirit of fear. In Him as the ever living focus of the divine love and energy in the world of men the words of the prophet find a satisfying fulfilment. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

FEARING BUT FOLLOWING

BY THE REV. HUBERT L. SIMPSON, M.A.
Glasgow

Jesus was going before them: and as they followed, they were afraid.

"Jesus was going before them: and as they followed, they were afraid."—St. Mark x. 32.

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THIS is St. Mark at his most graphic, etching with a phrase or two a scene that bites sharp and black into the imagination. We see that lone Figure striding on a little ahead of the others, with tense, drawn face, walking in silence, and an indescribable something about His bearing which caused a nameless uneasiness to those who loved Him and were determined to be with Him to the end. The writer makes you feel the sense of agitation in the ragged group of whispering followers, makes you feel it as he himself had felt it when St. Peter told him of it first of all. You feel the oppressive sultriness of the atmosphere; you catch the rumble of thunder among the Judæan hills on the dim and shadowy horizon; the dust of the Jerusalem high road rises choking in your throat. Something is going to happen, something dreadful. "They were in the way up to Jerusalem, Jesus walking in front of them: and they were sick with misgiving; and as they followed, they were afraid."

It seems all wrong. "Jesus was going before them." Isn't that all right? And as they

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followed they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. You would have expected something like that, would you not? Oh, this upsetting Book! You really never know what it is going to say next.

“ If I find Him, if I follow,
What His guerdon here ? ”

He must surely make it worth while. He must at least make it attractive. Some of our daily journals, having done their best to debauch the public taste by an endless serving up of the unsavouries of the table of life—murders, divorces, inane ongoings in high society, sordid details in low society, prize fights, racing and gambling, are now setting their readers to say why they do not go to church. That question is answered in every issue. You really cannot keep on poisoning the wells of life and thought, and then feign an infinite surprise that sweet water no longer bubbles therefrom. And the utter futility of enquiries conducted along such lines is shown in what is urged as the reason for empty churches—lack of attractiveness. It is not attractiveness that is ever going to fill the churches. It was not exactly the attractiveness of the outlook which crowded the recruiting offices with every man worth his salt. It was not attractiveness which made these men follow in the way going

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up to Jerusalem. The sincere soul knows full well the nature of the guerdon:

“Many a sorrow, many a labour,
Many a tear.”

St. Mark is here telling in strict detail the story of the soul's pilgrimage. “Jesus was going before them: and as they followed they were afraid.” It is not attractiveness, in the ordinary understanding of the word, that will fill up the gaps among the followers of Jesus. There is one thing, and one thing alone, which can do that, and that is the conviction that the following is going to take them somewhere; that although there be fear, there will also be a future, that though there be tears, there will in the end be triumph.

I think that it is not difficult for us to understand the fear of those who followed. It was fear of the unknown, fear of the future, fear of the untried. It would have been so much easier and pleasanter for them all if they had not taken that hard Jerusalem road. Why leave the silver shores of Galilee, full of association, crowded with memories, rich in blessing? Why take the road of risk and the highway of fear?

1. To those who followed that day there was only one answer to that question:

“It is the way the Master went,
Should not the servant tread it still?”

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The way of progress, the road of redemption, ever calls for the endurance of some misgiving on the part of those who follow. If we are not to spend all our days in the insufficient shallows and low mud-flats, we must take the tide at the flood. But none has ever taken it without a mixture of misgiving to temper his exultation. We are all explorers of our destiny, soldiers of fortune, ready, at least in the clean abandon of youth, to follow the Gleam: yet none has ever followed altogether without fear.

“ My purpose holds

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.

It may be that the gulfs will wash us down :
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.”

All the fulfilment of life depends upon our being ready to follow, even with the convoy of fear. But most assuredly Christ goes before everyone who is putting life to the touch in the great adventure, thinking more of the prize than of a base prudence.

2. But the people who followed Jesus that day knew that they were not only leaving youth and Galilee days behind them. He was leading them on to a new and untried state of existence. The whole social stability seemed to be imperilled.

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And I think that it is this nameless kind of fear of things which oppresses consciously or unconsciously the spirits of every one of us. We know that the events of the past few years have effected a radical change in the whole social, political, and international outlook. It is particularly hard for the older among us to adjust themselves to altered conditions and changed standards of life. It would be unnatural if a certain misgiving did not at times cloud our spirits. Yet we must beware of ever letting our natural foreboding give the impression that we fear that God has abandoned the rudder of the universe. We must believe that it is not for nothing that we are leaving Galilee behind, every step we take. Indeed, part of the weakness of the Church to-day in the world is due to the fact that she has got the reputation of having consistently opposed much social advance. Of course it is not true, as the countrymen of Knox and Melville, Henderson and Buchanan, of all men, should never forget. But there has been too much which has tended to give some colour to the charge. "In the dealings of man with man, in the order of society, in politics, every kind of false bias tugs at the human mind. Insidious are the whispers of self-interest, commanding is the voice of prejudice, custom,

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tradition, partisanship. How few can purge their hearts of these obstructions, and look facts squarely in the face, with single-minded resolve to find the right ! The moral progress of humanity has not been a fight with conscious wickedness, but with outworn customs, illusions, stupidity, wrong-headedness, blindness. How senseless, how perverse, seem to-day so many of the things that were once accepted without question by the wisest and the best ! The divine right of kings, the infallibility of priests, slavery, the stake for witches, the gallows for petty theft, to mention one or two of the thousand oppressions, stupidities, cruelties, that have held the world in thrall. Doubtless many of the things we would die for to-day are equally delusions. The comfort is that they will not be able to withstand the single eye, the pure heart. Thought and reason, truth and goodness, to them is the victory, though the war is never-ending." We are all in the way going up to Jerusalem, not knowing the things which shall befall us there: but the royal Master goes before, and the chief fear in our hearts should be lest we do not follow with all the eagerness and confidence with which we should.

3. But perhaps the fear which weighs most heavily of all with some of those who are following is that which is due to the religious changes

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~~which are sure to come.~~ In Galilee the healed and happy people had waited on Jesus, eager to make Him king. Why leave all that behind? It was precisely in that moment of their foreboding that Jesus took the Twelve, and, so far from dispelling, more than justified their gravest fears. "He took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall spit upon him, and shall scourge him, and shall kill him; and after three days he shall rise again." The disciples were so appalled by what they heard that they seem to have missed the last and most important word of all. They were so stunned by the horror and the shame that they did not have ears for the promise of the glory that should follow.

And I can always understand, even if I do not always share, the fear for what they affectionately call "the old-time religion" of those who are perturbed by the trend of present thought, and wonder where it is all going to land us. And yet if we keep following that silent Figure who ever goes ahead, moving on through endless change to ends which we but dimly comprehend,

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all must be well. The only danger is lest the fear should ever make us cease to follow. Those who followed faithfully in spite of their fears came back again to Galilee and all its old raptures and simplicities, came back with a new understanding of their Lord, came back to a Galilee redeemed and transformed.

And that is the upshot of all change. We may not like it; we may fail to comprehend it; we may openly and frankly fear it. And yet we must never imagine that safety lies in holding back. They are objects of an infinite pity who keep a pathetic watch over religious forms and theological phrases which have lost their meaning for most people to-day, and are consequently dead—keeping watch over them as Rizpah watched over her dead, to scare away the vulture and jackal that would devour all that was left to her of motherhood. No mort-safe can ever guard the vital secret of religion. The Song of Moses and of the Lamb is not a lykewake dirge; it is the marching song of an ever onward-sweeping army. Faith does not mean that we cease from asking questions; it means that we ask and keep on asking until some satisfying answer comes. “This is my rest, here will I stay, for I do like it well.”

The Christ who goes before us in the way

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calls us to a courage which bids us give up, not only the fleshly indulgences which Lent forbids, but that spiritual sluggishness and mental sloth which guard the pet infallibilities in which we could for ever take our ease and cease to think, in perfect peace. We are afraid—of course we are afraid. “If these things are not true,” we say, “where am I? How can I be sure of anything? If the Bible is not literally true, word for word, if the picture of God on which he fathers fed their faith is not accurate, where am I? What is there settled?”

The answer is that we are not meant to be settled, but to keep following. “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know.” I fear as I leave old familiar ground. But the answer to all my questions, the ground of all my assurance, the Saviour of my soul, the real Christ, is out there on the hard high road, moving steadily on; and if I am to know the truth I must at least try to keep up. The Church is not a Rizpah, keeping a forlorn watch over dead hopes and decaying creeds and the slaughtered sons of her womb, but a Naomi, cherishing in her warm bosom the child of even an alien mother, not deeming it incredible that of the lineage of Moab the Saviour of the world, the long-looked-for Messiah, may come.

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Our need to-day is for men like the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who can show us how to face a time of change and a period of transition; who can show us how "He taketh away the first that He may establish the second." What we need is a closer walk with Him who ever draws nigh to those who are sad only because they love Him, not because any of their cherished theories have been demolished; and to such He opens the Scriptures until their hearts burn, showing them that it behoved Christ to endure these things and to enter into His glory. The living word of God's truth is never going to suffer because a few irresponsible sciolists think they will demonstrate their superiority by speaking disrespectfully of the pole-star, but only if Christians show a base spirit of panic and a cowardly fear of light. The world will never heed a Rizpah Church which is content to remain in lonely isolation on the heights, hugging her private grief and keeping a selfish watch over her own dead offspring. Let her go down and join the reapers in the fields below, bearing the burden and heat of the day, that men's souls may be satisfied with bread; and then they will recognize her as the foster-mother of them all, the nursing mother of their new-born faith.

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It is life that ever interests and grips. And life keeps breaking the old moulds and running into new ones; but it is ever the same gold of Ophir which stands the assay of time. All around us we are conscious of the dead pull of gravity; yet upon every hillside thousands of tons are being lifted up against that downward drag of gravity, being lifted up by the power of growth and life. All that is needed to perform the miracle is a love of the sunlight and a yearning to reach towards it. All that is needed is response to the invitation of the spring.

The only way to counteract the downward drag of the perpetual presence of evil, of which we are so conscious all around us to-day, is by the planting and nurturing of more lives that lift sunward, lives quick with the impulse and power of growth, spirits that catch the breath of the living Spirit of God, and grow from strength to strength. So shall the brown fields of this our chastening Lent grow quick with the living green of the soul's recurring spring-time, and in the later days, resplendent with the golden glory of God's appearing.

" Onward, then, and fear not,
Children of the day,
For His word shall never,
Never pass away."

4

PROPITIATION

BY THE REV. W. J. SPARROW SIMPSON, D.D.
Hon. Canon of Chelmsford

"Christ gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God."—Ephes. v. 2.

Propitiation

It has been affirmed by certain writers in recent years that the Teaching of Christ and the Teaching of His Apostles do not agree about the conditions upon which God forgives.

According to the Teaching of the Apostles, God forgives our sins in virtue of the Death of Christ. That is clearly the teaching of St. Paul. Our Lord's Death was "an offering and a sacrifice to God" (Ephes. v. 2). According to the Fourth Evangelist, "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for the whole world" (1 St. John ii. 2). St. Paul had already written, "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation." And if St. Paul had been asked the question—Who is propitiated? there can be little doubt that he would have answered that it was the Father. Thus unmistakably the Death of Christ is represented in Scripture as an offering presented to the Father, in consequence of which mankind is to be forgiven. As Harnack says, "they placed it somehow under the aspect of a sacrifice to God."

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According to the Teaching of Christ, Divine forgiveness depends upon no condition whatever but repentance and amendment, which is the necessary consequence of sincere repentance. Forgiveness bestowed by God is similar to forgiveness bestowed by men. Just as it is a human duty to forgive when men repent, so it is with God. And if men are ready to bestow their forgiveness on others, God is ready to bestow His forgiveness upon them. If a man is unwilling to forgive the repentant, there is something seriously wrong in his moral state. He must be deficient in the love for others which exists perfectly in God. No such reluctance is conceivable on the part of God. Forgiveness is a necessary result of His Fatherly love. We are to be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. And He who commands us to forgive will not be inferior to His creatures in fulfilling what He bids them to do. The way of Divine forgiveness is shown in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, in which not a hint is given of Mediators or propitiation by a third person. As soon as the son repents he is at once received back and forgiven.

Between these two theories of Divine forgiveness of sin there is, it has been said, an absolute contradiction. If God is a loving Father Who

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pardons sin upon the sole condition of true repentance, then it cannot be true that He had to be propitiated by the sacrifice of Christ. The Death of Christ can have no reconciling effect on God at all. It can only have an effect on men. It may be a manward appeal, but a heavenward appeal it cannot be. It can operate on men by producing in them the repentance without which they cannot be forgiven, but it does nothing whatever in enabling God to forgive. It has accordingly been argued that :

“No doctrine of the Atonement can be a legitimate development of our Lord’s teaching which contradicts a feature of that teaching so fundamental as the truth that God is a loving Father who will pardon sin upon the sole condition of repentance.”

What, therefore, the Apostles have done is this: they made use of Jewish ideas to explain Christ’s Death: namely, such Jewish ideas as sacrifice and propitiation. They borrowed the terminology of the Hebrew Religion. But this terminology is inapplicable: because it involves ideas which belong to an inferior stage of religious development, but are quite inconsistent with the level to which religion was raised by Jesus Christ.

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Accordingly, we are told that what the modern mind must do is to go back from the Teaching of the Apostles to the Teaching of Christ. The Christian of to-day is recommended by writers of this School to eliminate from the apostolic teaching the doctrine of propitiation, on the ground that this doctrine is inconsistent with the fundamental principles of forgiveness as expounded by Christ Himself.

I

Before, however, accepting this advice to remove all ideas of propitiation and Godward offering from our conception of atonement, it will be advisable to reflect on the conditions under which the Teaching of Christ was given.

It is obvious to any reader of the Gospels that Christ's Teaching was restricted by the capacity of His hearers. Almost every page of the Gospel proves that Our Lord had the greatest difficulty in enabling His hearers to understand. Everybody knows how constantly they placed wrong constructions upon His utterances. He was compelled reproachfully to ask, "How is it that ye do not understand?" Consequently, all His teaching was restricted by their limitations. He taught "as they were able to bear it." Of no subject is that more true than the subject

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of His Death: for the simple reason that the Death of the Messiah was absolutely irreconcilable with their expectations, and on that matter they were hopelessly unteachable. Their unreceptiveness imposed a barrier on His instructions.

According to the Fourth Evangelist, our Lord Himself expressly drew the Apostles' attention in the very last of His discourses to the fact that the instructions which He had given them contained only a portion of the truths which He wanted to impart, and that completer instruction had been prevented, and was still prevented by their incapacity to receive. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

But Christ was also restricted by the fact that, whatever the meaning of His Death might be, He spoke *before the event*, and not after it. Now even if His Disciples had been exceedingly penetrating and receptive, still it was not possible that the meaning of the Passion should be made intelligible before it had taken place. When they could look back upon the Cross in the light of the Resurrection, then an apprehension of its meaning and value would be natural. But it was more than could be fairly expected of human nature, confused and bewildered

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by uncertain anticipations, to study the Cross and understand it while it lay in the future still unrealized.

Contrast with all this the circumstances in which the Apostles were placed as Teachers.

They taught *after the Event*. They were able to look back on the life and work of Christ as a finished whole. The entire course of His words and His actions lay before them. They could better appreciate His character. His place in bringing mankind to the Father would now naturally become clear as it never was before. It is not too much to say that what were mere hints and suggestions, capable it may be of more interpretations than one, now became luminous and unmistakable, because the facts of the Passion and Resurrection had cleared the mists away, and what were formerly mere points, now became as stars.

For ourselves, as members of His Church, it is natural to say that the Apostolic writers were our Lord's authorized exponents, and were also under the guidance of His Spirit. That is undoubtedly the primitive Christian belief. Their interpretation of His Person and of His work was not the mere product of unassisted human ingenuity. It was the product of reflection guided by supernatural enlightenment. In the

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very passage where Christ drew their attention to the fact that He had many things to teach which they were at the time unable to receive, He went on at once to assure them that further understanding of His principles would be subsequently divinely given. "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come He will guide you into all the Truth." That belief in Apostolic enlightenment by Christ's Spirit is not confined to the Fourth Evangelist. It was shared by St. Paul, who firmly believed himself to possess the mind of Christ. It is difficult to avoid the impression that this primitive belief rests ultimately on an assurance which our Lord had given.

The conclusion from all these facts seems clear. We are not intended to look for Christianity exclusively in the Teaching of Jesus. He stood in a period of transition when the Old was passing and the New was yet to become. The meaning of His Person and His Work must in the very nature of the case be drawn out by others rather than by Himself.

Against all this, however, it is contended that while no doubt Apostolic teaching may rightly add what is not actually contained in the teaching of Christ, it cannot rightly add what contradicts that teaching. And it is objected that the doctrine of a propitiation offered to the Father

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is nothing less than a contradiction to Christ's doctrine of Divine forgiveness granted on the sole condition of repentance.

Certainly a contradiction to Christ's teaching cannot be a true development of that teaching. But is there really a contradiction at all between these two ideas ?

II

Let us, then, now inquire what Propitiation is. Certainly if Propitiation means an attempt to pacify a vindictive Deity, Who could not be induced to forgive except by the agonies and slaughter of the innocent, then indeed it would be true that this conception could neither be reconciled with Fatherhood, nor with Love. And, no doubt, in primitive Religions, something like this is what Propitiation meant. But it is also true that this crude idea became moralized and refined in the later Religion of the chosen race. The meaning of Propitiation depends on our idea of Deity. Where thoughts of God are poor and low, propitiation may mean no more than pacifying the revengeful. Where thoughts of God become uplifted, propitiation will take a correspondingly sublimer meaning. When Isaiah spoke of making intercession for the transgressors, he taught propitiation, but it was a propitiation

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corresponding to his lofty conception of the Deity. And when the Apostles adopted that Jewish expression they surely raised its meaning higher still: just as they did with other Jewish terms, such as Messiah and Son of God. When St. John declared that Christ "is the propitiation for our sins," he never meant that Christ soothed an infuriated Deity. For the same Apostle teaches that Propitiation is a product of the Father's Love. "God so loved the world that He gave His Only Son." God Himself provided this Propitiation.

Clearly, then, the Christian meaning of Propitiation is not pacifying the vindictive. None the less it is a godward offering: "An offering and a sacrifice to God." It is an act of reparation to God for the wrong inflicted on His Holiness. It is an effort to make amendment for sin. It is an attempt, so far as that is possible, to neutralize the evil which has been committed; to pass the same judgment upon it which God must pass. Propitiation may assume many forms. But that is its underlying spirit. It is nothing else than making Reparation. It is not pacifying a person so much as rectifying a wrong. But it is a godward rectification. It is doing homage before the injured ideal of goodness and truth, or rather before Him in whom that ideal is realized.

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It is not an attempt to induce the Holy One to change His Mind. Rather it is an identification of man's mind with the mind of the Holy One.

Now, if Propitiation is essentially such as has been described, it is certainly impossible to get rid of it from the Christian Religion. It is useless to say, Repentance is necessary, Propitiation is not. For Repentance is nothing else than a form of Propitiation. He who prays "against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight" is making Propitiation. He is making such reparation to the ideal as lies within his power.

Let any man, conscious of his sin, make what propitiation he can, in order by his repentance to reconcile himself with God. But who that scrutinizes his own repentance with anything like impartiality can induce himself to think his godward offering adequate or complete? The attempt to isolate and individualize the penitent, on the principle of every man his own redeemer, is one of the falsest notions that ever deluded the human mind. We are social beings, and repentance is corporate as well as personal. And it is a constant law of human life that the godward offering made for sin by those who did not commit it is one of the most powerful agents in the sinner's recovery. Sins are not only the

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concern of the sinner: they are also the concern of the family, and the concern of the Nation, and the concern of the race.

When Christ upon the Cross exclaimed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," He was "making intercession for the transgressors." He offered to the Father a plea on the sinner's behalf. What else is this than propitiation? that is "a sacrifice and an offering to God," made in the sinner's behalf, and in order to secure the reconciliation of God with the sinful prior to the reconciliation of the sinful with God. No one for a moment dreams that this propitiating of the Father implies reluctance on the part of the Father to forgive. Surely it is the homage of a perfect sorrow which the sinner ought to make but cannot, presented by the perfect Man to the Father's Holiness.

The Apostolic doctrine of Propitiation must never be separated from the entire circle of Apostolic belief. When they taught that Christ is the Propitiation for our sins, and an offering and a sacrifice to God, they could not have supposed that anyone would imagine that God was first induced to love mankind through Christ's Propitiation. For they were profoundly convinced that Christ was Himself divine. They were certain that the judgment of Christ on human

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sin was the same as that of the Father, and that the Father's love for man was the same as that of the Son.

But the grandeur of Christ's Propitiation lay in this, that in Him humanity appeared in its right mind, presenting before the Father the offering of its sorrow which its sin demanded, an offering and a sacrifice to God.

THE VALLEY OF DECISION

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*"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision ;
for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of
decision."*—Joel iii. 14.

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THIS is a striking picture which the prophet Joel draws. He sees the nations of the world gathering in the valley of decision, mustering their forces for the great, final battle against God. They have long been oppressing Israel, but now the tide has turned. God Himself is about to fight for His people. It is the Day of the Lord, that day of judgment and decision, so often mentioned in the prophets, the day when God's cause will be vindicated and the supremacy of righteousness established. The picture is painted in lurid colours. Nature feels the tremendousness of the issue. The sun and moon are darkened, the stars withdraw their shining, and deep gloom fills the valley. But as to the result of the fight there is no doubt in the prophet's mind. God must win. The oppressors of Israel will be destroyed. Once again the land will grow fertile when the invaders have been expelled. The vine will clothe the mountain side, the dried-up brooks will be musical with running water. God will be a

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refuge for His people, and will make His dwelling-place in Zion.

Let us take the prophet's picture and apply it to ourselves. We shall discover in his teaching truths of permanent value. Herein lies the inspiration of the prophets, that though they spoke primarily to the men of their own time, they were taught of God to elucidate moral and religious principles of abiding significance. There is about their writings a modern note which is remarkable. There are many lessons for us in this thought of the valley of decision.

Every day we are in the valley of decision; we are part of that great multitude which God saw in the valley. Every day we make choices, and choices go to form character. We are perpetually being called on to decide between alternatives. Let us then think about decision as an all-important factor in human life.

Need I seek to prove that we possess the power of choice, that God has given us a measure of freedom, and that we can select between good and evil? The final argument for the reality of human freedom is that we know that we are free. It may be difficult to refute logically the arguments of the determinist, but, when I do wrong, I can never really satisfy my conscience by

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pleading that circumstances, or my training, or my inherited disposition were the cause of my sinning. No; there is something within me which tells me that I need not have done what I did, that I am responsible, that of my own free will I chose the worse course. My remorse is due just to this fact that I am aware that I possess this power of decision, and chose wrongly. Morality becomes meaningless if its imperious "I ought" is not matched by an "I can" and "I will."

It is true, however, that this power of free choice, which belongs to us all, is not equally developed in everyone. It is, in fact, something which is not so much a ready-made and realized possession, as a capacity which we have to expand by exercise and training. We have to struggle to win our true freedom. Take the case of the young child. It clearly has some freedom. It is not a machine, but its life is largely governed by impulse, and it is very impressionable and easily ruled by the suggestions of others. It is also extraordinarily imitative, and copies its elders. We cannot feel that its freedom is anything very formed or mature. Its will-power is in the making; there are as yet no settled choices in its life. Or take the case of the child born and bred in a city slum, coming of

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a criminal stock, and surrounded by an atmosphere of vice and squalor. The scales are heavily weighted against that child. The power of choosing the good is there, but the inducements to evil are so strong that we feel that the child is handicapped from the start in the race of life. In this matter of freedom, then, we do not all enter upon existence at the same level, and in none of us is the will fully formed at the beginning. Hence only God can pass a completely fair judgment on a human character. When the Psalmist said, "let my judgment come forth from thy presence," he felt how impossible it was for any man to be sure that in judging his neighbour he was judging right. Only God, who sees all and knows all, all the struggles and temptations, all the handicaps due to heredity and circumstances—only God could really weigh the man's life. So he prays that his own sentence may come from God, who has the necessary insight and knowledge to judge with unerring fairness.

This thought of freedom as something which we have to struggle to win, and of the will as in the making, rather than ready-made, is of special importance to-day, when psychology is making such advances, and when we hear so much about the power of suggestion. M. Coué's Law of

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Reversed Effort has attracted much attention. He has stated that in the case of a conflict between the imagination and the will, the former always conquers. A drunkard, for example, resolves to make a strenuous effort to snap the chain which binds him. He summons up all his will-power, and says, "I will never touch drink again." We are told that he is certain to fall, that he is doing the very thing which will lead to disaster. Before the imagination with its alluring picture of the bottle the will is bound to prove powerless. What the drunkard should have done is to make no effort to use his will, but to suggest to his imagination that he will conquer. Hence we find in books dealing with treatment by suggestion the advice that the patient should be as passive as possible and allow the suggestion, made either by himself or others, to work unconsciously in his mind.

Now is it true that the imagination always conquers the will? Everything depends on what you mean by will. The imagination does not conquer the fully-formed will. That is supreme, and rules a man's life. But the unformed will, which should properly be called wish rather than will, is no doubt often too weak to have the mastery. The will, we must remember, is not a special faculty superadded

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to the other parts of a man's nature. It is the whole man acting, the personality expressing itself with purpose and conscious self-determination. The drunkard in the illustration just given was not a whole. He made his tremendous effort just because he was afraid of failure. He was over-anxious. Before his imagination no doubt would come later the alluring vision of the bottle; but another vision was present at the time when he made his decision, the vision of himself miserably failing again as he had so often failed in the past, and this paralysed his will. Suggestion is enormously valuable for us all in our moral struggles, because it helps to implant in us new imaginations, pictures of good instead of pictures of evil. It creates an atmosphere, in which the allurements of evil lose their power, and the will to good has a chance to develop. There is profound psychological truth in St. Paul's advice, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable . . . whatsoever things are pure . . . think on these things."

All important, then, is it that we do not deny to the will its sovereignty over human life. Much psychological teaching to-day places the emphasis on the power of inherited tendencies and impulses, on the part played by the sub-

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conscious, and tends to make man the plaything of forces over which he has no real control. But the will is the citadel of personality; and, if there is any moral purpose at all in the universe, that purpose is to be found in the training of ourselves to make open-eyed decisions in life, to form noble characters, to be whole instead of a patchwork of fragments. To decide, and to decide strongly in that to which God calls us all.

How solemn is this thought of the valley of decision ! Each of us is responsible to God for the choices which he makes. None can avoid the responsibility. No one else can choose for us. And all our life long we are in the valley, choosing daily, hourly. And imperceptibly, but surely, the choices add themselves together and form the settled habit and temper. Every day on the loom of our life the pattern of character is being woven. Every day we are fashioning for ourselves our destiny, and proving the truth of the statement that what a man sows that shall he reap. Perhaps there are some who have never really faced what this great fact of human freedom means. Let them do so now. Do not allow circumstances to mould you. Do not take your tone from the society round you. Dare to stand alone; call that will into play and

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learn to decide. Then your manhood will have a chance to develop as God means it to develop. Then you will tread your Father's house as a son rejoicing in the "law of perfect liberty." So much is at stake. Everything which is really worth having is at stake, manhood, character, truth, eternity. Your very self is at stake, that self which has no parallel in all the universe, that self in which God has set His divine image. The things of time fade, and the fashion of the world perishes. But God abides, and the eternal values abide, and the souls whose task it is to realize those values in themselves. The call comes to us to-day to range ourselves on the side of those eternal things, to be men and women of decision, to choose the good and learn to love it.

The valley of decision ! There are only two ways out of any valley. One leads up and the other down. You may follow down the valley to where the plain begins, and the path is easy and there is no uphill work. But it brings you out to the region of the towns, where the air is thick with smoke, and the stream is stained with sewage, and where the keen mountain breezes never come. Or you may climb up. The track is rough. The ascent is steep, and at times mist may obscure the path. But follow up.

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It will bring you to the mountain top. There is the cradle of the stream with its untainted waters. There around you are the giant peaks. They are the first to catch the sunrise; and when the snow falls, they keep it white and pure. Thence you may obtain visions of your distant goal, that far-shining, spiritual city which is your eternal home.

We can see what the picture means. We may go down the valley by the easy road, and choose a life of sin or pleasure and idleness, and breathe a stifling atmosphere, and lose sight of the vision of God. Or we may climb to the spiritual heights of life, where truth and love and honour dwell; nay, where God dwells, and Christ—Christ who waits to crown with eternal life each strenuous climber, as the dawn crowns the mountain summits with its circle of rose. There are only two roads out of the valley of decision. Which road are you and I going to take?

But someone may say, "You tell us to decide, and to strengthen our wills; but how can I fight, alone and unaided, all my temptations?" We have not to fight alone. Let us remember the secret of the prophet's confidence. He knew which way the fight in the valley was going, because he knew that God was on the side of His people. His strength was their strength.

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All the resources of His power were at their disposal. Has God changed? Does He leave us to-day to fight unaided? Why the very heart of the message of Christianity is that Christ can give us power. Christianity is a religion of life and power; that is its very essence. And so, as we seek to train our wills, let us not forget that the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of the Living Christ, is waiting to reinforce any efforts we may make. Think what suggestion does. You open your minds to receive new influences. New thoughts, new ideals are suggested to you; and gradually, as you yield yourself to them, you are transformed. Your natural power of resistance to evil is strengthened, and your will has a chance to assert itself.

If human agency can do that, are we going to say that the creative, life-giving Spirit of God cannot do infinitely more? Never think of God as remote in some distant heaven. God is Spirit, and is not confined by any limits of space. God is round about us always, nay, within us. His Spirit is perpetually exercising pressure on us, seeking to break down the barriers which keep Him away, seeking to make us better instruments of His purpose. God desires above all things to make human personality the vehicle of His abounding life.

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Let him, then, who would strengthen his will, who would pass through the valley of decision master of himself and of the fight, seek the aid of the Spirit of God. Have we tried what prayer can achieve; I mean real prayer, not the formal, mechanical exercise, which so often passes under that name? When we really pray, we put ourselves into that attitude of quiet expectancy and waiting upon God, which provides the very condition for the Spirit to do His work. When the passions of the heart and the voices of the world are stilled, then God can speak. When the soul is expectant, then God can give us His power.

Here, then, I leave the matter, bidding you ponder over these two great facts, bidding you learn by experience to relate them, the one to the other. First, your power of choice and decision, the reality of it, the grave import of it. Second, the power of God which can enter into you and reinforce your will. "Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God which worketh in you." Human life turns on these two pivots. By these two fixed stars we have to steer our course. We are all in the valley of decision, and we all have to fight. But God fights with us, and that makes the whole difference. Faint-hearts take new courage, waverers learn to

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stand firm, when they see the Captain of their salvation near them ; and the misty gloom of the valley grows bright with the sunlight of His presence.

